

THE LONDON READER

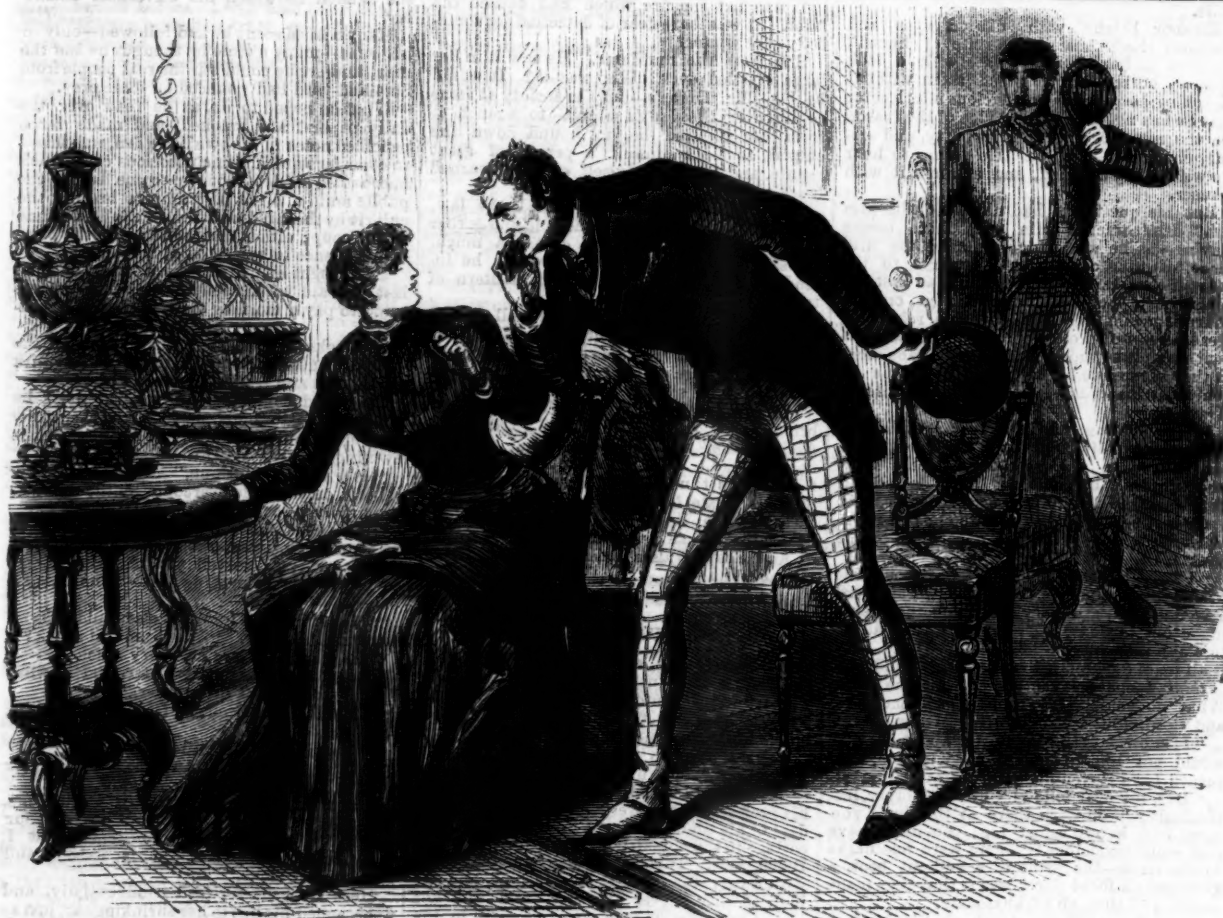
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[A STARTLING ACCUSATION.]

LADY RAVENHILL'S SECRET.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LORD AND LADY RAVENHILL drove to their destination in silence, each drawn back to the furthest limit of their corner in the brougham, as though touching each other were the seeds of some deadly infection.

The carriage lamps flashed now and then on the diamond stars in her hair, her white fur mantle, and her fair, pale face, with tightly shut lips and eyes; and so dark and quiet was the other corner of the carriage that at the first glance her ladyship seemed alone; but a closer inspection would reveal a glittering solitaire stud, an expanse of shirt front, a tuberoso buttonhole, and a man, who wore on his gloomy, dark face an expression of weariness, of angry dissatisfaction with his fate, of contempt for himself, and the whole world as well.

The brown horses were quick steppers, and before long this ill-matched pair, who made an ideal couple to the looker-on, were passing

up the shallow staircase arm-in-arm—that is to say, her delicate, taper, white gloved fingers just touched the sleeve of his right arm.

Once in the big yellow drawing-room, blazing with lights, gorgeous with yellow satin and gilt furniture, bright with looking-glasses, and full of the best people, they parted with mutual alacrity; but not before their entrance had been noted and admired.

The men's eyes were centred on Eleanor, and the women's on her husband.

She soon found herself benched between two stout, much-jewelled and belaced matrons, discussing the state of the roads, whilst her better (?) half had become the centre of a little knot of hunting men, and was expounding the details of the finish of the run—yesterday's run—from Copland Wood to Faller's Gorse, which he and the first whip had only lived to see.

As Eleanor's eyes wandered to where he stood she could not help seeing and admitting that he was by far the best-looking man in the room, that his glance was as bold and as fearless as a hawk's, as frank as a child's. Could he wear such a countenance and be guilty?

Could he, if he were innocent all along—her heart gave a bound at the thought, half of rapture, half of horror—if he were innocent what would be her fate? His innocence proved he would thrust her from his doors; but, no, it was impossible! Facts were too strong—the finger of truth seemed to her to point steadily the other way.

Her conjectures were here interrupted by a very obese, red-faced, old nobleman tendering her his arm, with some muttered compliment about it being his good fortune to have the honour of conducting her to dinner, and she rose mechanically and went downstairs to the feast.

Just before her, laughing and talking with great animation, was her husband and a piquant, lively-looking lady in amber satin. Yes, he was laughing as if he had not a care in the world. Yes, he appears infinitely amused, and his hearty appreciation of some ridiculous witticism mangers his grave-eyed wife not a little—not merely with him, but with his vivacious partner.

They sit exactly opposite to her, and are perfectly visible above the orchids and maiden-

hair fern, so that not a gesture, a look, much less a smile, escapes her.

Conversation turns—oh! why has the subject such a hideous fascination for some people?—on murders, on a recent tragedy in that very neighbourhood, and to some unlucky man it occurs that Lord Ravenhill can give a full and succinct account of the mysterious and awful affair that occurred close to his own great property, the questioner an eager-eyed, middle-aged man, with bland manners and a mile.

Eleanor listens with dilated eyes and blanched cheeks, her eyes, spite of herself, fastened on her husband's face with a look of stony horror, but he meets them without blenching, assures his pertinacious interlocutor that he has not the smallest idea of the reason for the murder of the guilty party, and artfully changes the subject. He seems to hear his wife's gasp of relief, and answers it with a sneer.

But his questioner had not done with him yet. He attacked him once more before leaving—as he was standing near the fireplace, uttering conventional truisms to the lady of the house, and smiling as best he could when she complimented him on his charming wife, and saying what a refreshing treat it was to an old woman like her to see a young couple so thoroughly united to each other as they seemed to be, and that there was no doubt but that some marriages were made in Heaven!

Just as she concluded this little speech Lady Ravenhill and Mr. Digby joined the group, and Mr. Digby, a sharp-looking, elderly man, who prided himself on being a second Fouché, in the amateur way of course, and upon having found the clue to one or two remarkable crimes, returned once more to the charge.

"I want to hear something more about this business up in your part of the world, Lord Ravenhill. It's a very odd thing they never made out any case. I've taken rather an interest in it"—button-holing him—"and read it all up and placed it together in my mind, and I think I could lay my finger on the man. What do you say?" stepping back one pace, and viewing his victim interrogatively.

"I know nothing whatever about it, and would not like to hazard a conjecture," returned Lord Ravenhill, with perfect calmness.

"But, my dear fellow!" cried the other, imploringly, "you were there at the time; you must have known something; you must have had your suspicions! There were footmarks in the snow—the print of a well-out boot, a gentleman's foot! How was it that they made nothing of that, eh?" anxiously.

Lord Ravenhill merely shook his head in answer to this crucial question, and, after a momentary pause, said, with the greatest self-command—

"But why do you take an interest in such ghastly subjects? You are not qualifying for an amateur detective, are you?" ironically.

"I've always had a little leaning that way," rejoined the other, with conscious pride. "I read up all great murder cases, and go into some of them heart and soul. Now, this one in particular has taken a strong hold upon me, odd and strange as you may think it. It is so uncommon—there is something so strange, so almost supernatural about it? I'll never rest till I find out something—something about that fellow—presumably a gentleman—who was prowling round the cottage, but never traced. Believe me," laying his hand impressively on his auditor's arm, "believe me, my dear fellow, he is the man, and he will swing for it yet. I've—"

But what more he was going to say was lost to the public for ever; for, apparently overcome by the heat of the fire, Lady Ravenhill, with a strong but futile effort to grasp at a chair, awayed gently, slowly backward, and collapsed upon the carpet in one crushed bundle of satin and velvet, and a dead faint.

Mr. Digby had not boasted of his prowess in vain—for once he made a good shot.

What? he asked himself, as people rushed about for fans, and smelling bottles, and burnt feathers, what was the connection between the tragedy of which he was speaking and the prone figure on the floor.

She had, he had not failed to remark, been devouring him with her eyes for the last few minutes with a long look of incredulous horror and fear; and why should the fire, which was not overpowering, affect her more than the other ladies?

It was not the fire which had caused the faint. It was fear—fear of detection for somebody—for whom?

She knew the murderer. He saw it in her large, startled eyes. Who was it? It would be his—Mr. Digby's—duty to society at large to discover the lady's secret—to wrench it from her if need be, to hound down the culprit, to make himself a person of great repute, and to cover himself with well-earned laurels.

This murderer, who had baffled the law, was not to escape, and it was no hole-and-corner affair, but a kind of *casse claire*, a much-talked-of case of business, on which he intended, if possible, to turn the lantern of truth.

It would be his business, as well as his pleasure, to worm himself into Lady Ravenhill's confidence. She was a transparent-looking, singularly beautiful young woman, and he intended to lay siege to her without delay.

He would call to inquire for her; he would bring her Ruskin's "Seven Lamps of Architecture," which she had said she had never read, and he would build the foundations thus of a confidential and, perhaps, intimate friendship; and he would go further than that—he would find out what connection there was between her fainting fit and Rosie Waller's murder. Was it not her husband?

CHAPTER XXVII.

Mr. Digby was a middle-aged barrister—briefless, if the truth must be told—who had wormed himself into the very best Berkshire society. How it would have been hard to say, but the fact remained that he was there. He talked in a vague way of chambers in the Temple, the western circuit, and term, so as to give people an idea that he still followed his profession; but everyone knew that a great deal of his time was spent in his sister's tiny cottage in the outskirts of the county town of Banchester. This sister was an old maid, with a very small (but secure) income, and she idolised her clever brother, and did not expect to be drawn into county society in his train. No; she was content to stay at home and contrive ways and means, and look up dainty little dishes, see that his linen was beautifully got up and mended; his white ties and handkerchiefs were her own special care, and she felt repaid when she beheld her dear Benjamin in his evening dress suit, with one of her best efforts in the shape of a tie under his blue shaven chin, a scented handkerchief in his hand, and a flower in his buttonhole, on his way to a dinner party at some well-known nobleman's table.

People said that "Digby was a useful fellow at elections—a clever fellow—a sharp fellow—a most gentlemanly man—given up his profession and come down to have a little quiet in the country; but a few—a very few—whispered that his profession had relinquished him, and that he was an idle loafer, looking round for 'a chance,' waiting for 'something to turn up,' and that not alone was he idle, but he was, like other people with empty hours, very apt at doing the Devil's business! and that he ought to be labelled 'dangerous.'"

The truth was that the Bar was too slow for him. He lacked petition, application, and steadiness in his youth. If he could have gone up fortune-hunter, with one brilliant case after another, he believed himself he

would have been Lord Chancellor by this time.

But these cases never come in the way of junior counsel; and sick of waiting—sick of looking on at other men's triumphs—he threw up the whole thing in disgust, and retired to Blankshire, to live on his wife and on his sister. He still took an interest in law and read up all criminal cases with avidity, putting clue to clue, and following the different trails with the zest of a professional detective, and this was the branch in which his cleverness chiefly lay.

Many a false scent he had followed—only in his head—many a time he thought he had the man, and ere he could stir the real people from Scotland-yard had pounced on their prey.

What he hoped to do, as he read over the daily papers, and smoked, and made large pencilled notes in his own little den, was this—to come forward in some notorious case which had baffled all detection—to come before the public amid a blaze of trumpets leading the culprit by the hand, and thus make his fortune at one coup; either that, or to make the price of his silence in hard coin of the realm.

He thought he had the thing before him at last, he said to himself, as he made up his mind to pay a morning visit to Lady Ravenhill.

She looked a good deal surprised when she saw him enter her drawing-room with a smirk on his face and a series of deep bows.

He "had come to inquire after her," he murmured, "to hope that she had entirely recovered from her fainting fit of the previous evening."

"It was really nothing," she said, quickly. "I was only a little overcome by the heat of the fire—the room was stifling!"

"The fire!" he echoed. "How odd! It was quite low, I remarked. But I smelt it was the fire; for, to tell you the truth, I was afraid it was something else—some mental shock—"

"Something else! What else could it be?" she asked, sharply. "What mental shock?"

"I thought you seemed very much—ah—I don't know how to put it—interested in what I was saying about the murder."

"Murder!" she echoed, faintly, with white, dry lips.

"Yes, murder!" significantly.

And now, Mr. Digby, for a bold stroke, for once in your life.

"It struck me from your face—excuse me, Lady Ravenhill, and order me out of your house if I am wearying you—but what I am going to say to you is sacred, and for your ear alone."

Here he bent forward confidentially, and approached his lips to her arching ear, just as a distant door opened noiselessly—but not intentionally noiselessly—and the master of the house stood upon the threshold in his scarlet coat and hunting boots.

It was not his way to frequent the drawing-room at such an hour, but he had come to make formal inquiries about Lady Ravenhill's health, not having seen her since the previous night, and this was what he saw: that old dandified fellow Digby bending towards her in a most confidential attitude and whispering in her dainty ear.

True her whole pose represented shrinking aversion, terror, hate, reluctance, but that might be only assumed. With a smothered imprecation into the depths of his moustache, he turned away unseen, and closed the door upon this pretty cabinet picture.

"What a life he led," he said to himself, wearily, as he slowly ascended to his own special sanatorium. "Was there a groom or gardener about the place he would not gladly change places with? Married and made a fool of; falling foolishly in love with a girl, and finding she was his own wife! Just as he was in hopes that all would end well his cup was dashed to the ground by this awful murder of poor Rosie's, and his wife persisted in believing that he was the culprit—that he was a red-handed brute, dyed with the blood of a woman

and child. It seemed at times too awful to realize; it was like a bad dream!

No one but himself dreamt of the immense sums of money he was laying out in what seemed a hopeless search for the real murderer. But the detectives at Scotland-yard had had many a handsome cheque, and yet the answer was "no clue—an exceptional case."

"Surely some day murder would out," he said to himself. "Some day and some," as he passed his room impatiently from end to end. "And once I am cleared she may go where she will, but never before. I will hold her against herself, till she hears the truth, and confesses the injustice she has done me. But were I to release her now I may never see her again, and she would probably go to the other end of the world and to her grave, branding me in her own mind as the vilest of breathing creatures. No, I shall be cleared some day! I feel it—I know it! No one suspects me but her, and she—she has cause. Heaven and earth! why that night of all nights should she stray about the house, and find her way to my room? Why that night of all nights had I taken the money, or why, if I did take it, was I not an hour or two later at her cottage and saved poor Rosie's life? Why is fate so cruel—so hard—so unjust? Why should all these great, unnatural, unusual things happen to an every day, hum-drum fellow like me? Only for the excitement of hunting and a stableful of first-class hunters and being all day in the saddle, forgetting everything but the fences in front of me, I'm," clenching his hand and striking his forehead, "perfectly certain I should go stark, staring mad! And as to her, I don't believe now, that if she were to go round the room on her knees after me, I should forgive her!"

Would you not, my dear sir? Don't you only wish you had the chance?

To return to her ladyship and Mr. Digby, who was just in the act of whispering his suspicions, when we somewhat abruptly left them.

"It seems to me that you have a suspicion—perhaps more than a suspicion—of the perpetrator of that deed of darkness!"

"I—I!" she cried, starting back. "You must be mad! You must be out of your senses, Mr. Digby! Your suspicion is most unwarrantable, most outrageous!"

"But you have not answered my question all the same!" he returned, pertinaciously. "Do not your suspicions rest upon some one? Pray never mind replying by your word of mouth. You have what they call a speaking face, Lady Ravenhill, and I see as plain as if it were written in black and white that I am right!" in a tone of triumphant conviction.

"You are not; you are not!" she exclaimed, in a kind of frenzy. "What possesses you to come here and torture me with your mad delusions?"

"But they are not delusions!" he answered, decidedly. "I am sure you could lay your hand on somebody, and say, 'Thou art the man!' And do you think, Lady Ravenhill, that it is right of you to shield this odious villain from being brought to justice?"

"Mr. Digby," she said, starting to her feet, "your suggestions and your remarks are the maunderings of a madman! If you will not leave my house this instant I shall quit it myself. You are dangerous!"

"Quite right, Lady Ravenhill, I am," he replied, bowing, "but not in the way you imagine! I am only dangerous to criminals."

"Then let me have no more beating about the bush," she cried, passionately, "but tell me at once what you are driving at, and what you mean—speak out!"

"Just what I have been trying to do all along!" he answered, "if your ladyship would only give me the chance. Pray sit down and compose yourself, and listen to me patiently."

So Lady Ravenhill sank down into her easy chair, and in a listening attitude, but with a pale, awestruck face. The following information was poured into her reluctant ears.

"I've always had a taste for tracking out

great crimes," he said, clearing his throat impressively.

"Spare me the history of your tastes, they have no possible interest for me," she interrupted, in an icy voice.

"All right!" he continued, exasperated at her tone. "This murder in the North was in everybody's mouth. I read up the case with interest, and put two and two together. I discovered that you and your husband were in the neighbourhood—at the Monktona. I discovered more than that. I heard indirectly that he had been—shall we say a friend of the unhappy girl?"

"Yes, say a friend," she muttered, looking away.

"And that he had been out till long past midnight on the fatal night. Now the question is," hitching his chair a few inches closer to his agonized companion, "where had he been?"

To this potent inquiry there was no reply for some seconds, except the ticking of the clock. The thumping of Lady Ravenhill's heart, she said to herself, was louder than that time-piece. Surely he heard it. It must betray her.

"I am sure you know," he proceeded, coolly, gleating over her as a chessman over a trembling deer he has just struck down, "and I am equally sure that you will tell me!" firmly.

Eleanor made a supreme effort and faced him as though at bay. She knew now that the snibers of love for Hugh were not quite extinguished in her heart, that she would stand between him and this slouch-hound of a man—aye! if needful, with her life, and save him from a fate she shuddered to contemplate.

"I fail to see your reasons for suspecting Lord Ravenhill. The fact of his being out that special night, if he was out, points to nothing; and your courage and insolence in coming to me with your infamous conjectures are, I am certain, unparalleled in any one's experience."

She looked at him with eyes bright with indignation, and if one of those glances could kill, he was certainly a dead man! How odious, hideous, contemptible he was, she said to herself! Short and square in figure, with iron-grey hair, thin and ragged, a radiant face, little piggy-back eyes, and enormous ears standing out like cabbage leaves at either side of his round, bullet head. The very sight of him made her feel sick with repulsion.

"Here," he returned, producing a roll of newspaper cuttings, "is the whole case from first to last. I've read it over attentively, and made up my mind thoroughly on the subject. In my opinion the evidence points distinctly to one person; and when I knew I was to meet you at Sir Mark Dalrymple's the other evening, I was resolved to put my ideas to the proof. I brought the subject twice on the tapis purposely with your husband, and twice he changed the subject. I must confess that he stood the test bravely and well. There was no shade of guilt on his countenance. He must be an accomplished actor, and if all had depended on him, all would have been well; but it was you who renitted the clue. Your face spoke volumes, and you lost all self-control, and then fainted, and told all!" See here!" he proceeded, unfolding long slips of paper, "read the case over, and you yourself will be amazed that he has escaped so long."

"And even if your wicked suspicions were true—you miserable wretch—do you suppose for one second that I would deliver my husband's life into your hands?" she demanded, in a choked voice, shaking all over.

"I don't know. You might. People—people from whom I have information—"

"Servants?" she interrupted, scornfully.

"Servants, if you like, say that you are by no means the devoted couple that the outside world imagines—that you are more like two convicts chained together than a pair of love-birds! That he never speaks to you nor seeks your society from week's end to week's end,

unless in public. This is easily accounted for. You hold his life in your hand. He not only hates you—he fears you!"

"What object have you for coming here to-day and telling me all these frightful things, true or not? What concern is this of yours?" she cried, desperately. "Why do you meddle?"

"It is the concern of all honest men to further the ends of justice! If I drag the murderer to justice I shall earn the thanks—nay, the applause—of the whole British public! But I will forego this on one condition," declaiming with the papers in his hand.

In one second Eleanor had snatched them from him with the quickness of lightning and thrown them into the fire—thrown them into the heart of the coals—and guarded them with the poker whilst they curled up into yellow thin black fragments, and floated up the chimney.

"There, they are gone, at any rate!" she exclaimed, in a tone of fierce defiance.

Mr. Digby was so completely taken aback by this sudden action on the part of the lady of the house that he stood for some seconds glaring at her in silence, and then he said, viciously,—

"No harm done! no harm done! Plenty more copies to be had! But you have done a foolish thing, madam. You have shown your hand and burned your boats. If you did not fear the contents of those little bits of paper, why did you snatch them from me and burn them to ashes?"

Yes, it had been a rash and impulsive act, she now admitted to herself, as she leant against the chimney-piece, trying to steady her shaking limbs.

"And what are your conditions?" she asked, in a faint voice. "What do you want?"

"Money!" he retorted, laconically.

"Money! How much money?"

"Ten thousand pounds!"

"Heaven and earth! And how am I to procure it for you?" she gasped—"the ten thousand pounds!"

"I must leave that to the resources of your own fertile brain, my lady. You have your pin-money—your diamonds!"

"But the ten thousand pounds," she reiterated, in a tone of despair. "I shall never be able to get so much!"

"It is not too much, madam, when you come to consider that it is the price of a man's life!" he returned, with slow, impressive significance. "To be frank with you, I am a poor man. My profession brings me in but little; my tastes are refined; my expenses heavy. I've long been looking out for some way of making a good thing—the discovery of some notoriety—and thus bringing my name before the public, and bringing money and large fees into my empty pockets. I have been waiting a long time for this 'case' that is to make my fortune, and I've found it at last, unluckily for you—for your husband is the 'subject.' I have the whole thing fitted in like a beautiful mosaic of circumstantial evidence. I have the most damning evidence at my fingers' ends, and I must either hang him, and so fling my name before the public as one of the most acute lawyers of the day, or else you will have to pay me the ten thousand pounds in hard coin of the realm!"

"And if I do pay you," she faltered, "what guarantee shall I have that you will not play me false and use this chain of evidence all the same? Who would trust you?"

"Very fairly put, ma'am. You have your wits about you, I perceive! My word would not be sufficient, would it?" smiling unpleasantly.

"No," she returned, emphatically. "It would not!"

"Then we will draw up a little deed, my dear lady, that will bind me as tight as wax! I'll see to that myself, you need not fear!"

"Does anyone else know what you know?" she asked, in a strange, hollow whisper.

"Not a soul; and now, when am I to leave

the money?" he added, in a brisk, business-like voice.

"You must give me time!"

"How much time?"

"At least three weeks!"

"Three weeks!" he exclaimed, in a tone of resentful wonder.

"Yes; I cannot get it for you sooner!" she said, firmly.

"It's a deuced long time to wait!" he muttered, peevishly. "I've a good mind to chuck it up, and go in for the *other* business!"—now pacing the room, with his hands behind his back, and seemingly lost in a sea of speculation.

Eleanor's heart literally stopped beating, as she surveyed him with eyes glazed with horror. This bargaining for a man's life was the most awful experience she had ever known. She felt faint and sick with the frightful tension in her nerves—her head felt reeling.

"You see!" said the lawyer, coolly. "I shall make more than ten thousand by the deal—a great deal more! It will be quite a property to me!" rubbing his hands.

"But you will have to wait years for it!" she cried, eagerly. "And you will have to work hard for it! This comes to you without delay—without work, and you shall have it, if I have to pawn the very dress on my back!" she added, excitedly.

"But he will help you? He will shell out. He is getting off cheap!"

"He won't give one penny towards it! He won't even hear of it!"

"And why not?" in pretended amazement. "Because he declares that he is as innocent as I am—that he had no more hand in it than the babe unborn!"

"Ah, ah! Does he, does he!" laughing again and rubbing his hands. "You and I, Lady Ravenhill, know better than that, eh! Well, now I must be going, we will say this day three weeks for our little business. You won't shake hands! Well—well—never mind it this time. Good afternoon!" bowing away back towards the door, and getting himself awkwardly out of the room.

No sooner was he gone than his unhappy companion staggered to her feet, and made her way upstairs, scarcely able to climb them. So shaken was she in both mind and body, she was clinging to the balustrades with a face as white as marble, when her husband met her coming down. He paused for a moment.

"What is the matter?" he asked. "Are you ill? Shall I give you an arm?"

To this she merely shook her head in a sign of strong dissent, and still continued to creep upstairs; he following slowly behind, as if expecting every minute she would collapse at his feet.

"What is the matter with you?" he persisted. "You must be ill: I'll run down and send off for Jones!"

"No, I am not ill!" she replied at last, having gained the landing, and confronted him with haggard eyes, and an ashen, white face.

"What was that lawyer fellow doing here?" her husband asked, suddenly struck by the coincidence.

"He only came to pay a visit!"

"A visit! I like his cheek! When I want a six-and-eight-pence I can send for him! Really, Eleanor, you look awfully seedy," he added, struck by the change in her appearance.

A change that had been creeping over her face for the last six weeks, and still did not mar its beauty. Her cheeks were a little hollow—the outlines of her face sharper; her eyes had a strange, startled expectant expression—so different to that of the gay, laughing brilliant orbs of pretty Nellie Hill.

"You look as if—"

"As if I were going to die?" she interrupted, in a mocking voice. Then suddenly sinking it to a wholly different key, she added, almost under her breath, as she paused within the

threshold of her boudoir, "Going to die? I only wish I were!" and then she passed in slowly, and closed the door in his face.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

For two days after this unpleasant visit Lady Ravenhill did not appear. She remained in her own apartments, wearing out her brains in hard, persistent thought; endeavouring to make out how, within three weeks, she was to lay hands upon the sum of ten thousand pounds! It must be got somehow, she told herself, with feverish anxiety—it must, it must! It was the price of a man's life! That sentence kept ringing in her ears till it seemed burnt into her very brain, and to sear and wither up all her other ideas. But where was this ransom to come from? she asked herself, as anxiously, as she paced her rooms from end to end in one long, untiring tramp.

Digby thought he knew all her resources when he mentioned her diamonds and pin-money so glibly, but the diamonds were heirlooms—family property. To sell them would amount to a felony; but were it not better, she asked herself, to do this felon's deed than to let one of the old and noble name go to a felon's grave, with a halter round his neck? Great needs must have vigorous remedies. Then there was her jointure—three thousand a year—settled on her for life. Could she not get that amount advanced? But to whom could she go? Not the family lawyer, who would insist on knowing the reason of this pressing necessity for so much ready money. To some other lawyer—some money lender? Yes, she often saw advertisements in the papers:—"Prepared to advance large or small sums on notes of hand." What did she know about ravening wolves of hundred per cent. interest; this miserable lamb from the country? She resolved that she would go up to London alone; if need be, have an interview with her own solicitor, but tell him nothing beyond the bare fact that money she must and would have. But first she would try her fortune with a stranger—a money-lender in the Strand, who advertised in a most good-natured and sympathising manner. To Mr. Issachar she would appeal, and pawn her little fortune for as many years as he thought fit; but this she could not do for several days. She must wait till her husband went away for a couple of days to hunt in the opposite side of the county, and till the coast was clear. To-morrow night was the hunt ball; she must appear there, diamonds and all, as befitting the wife of one of the staunchest supporters of the hunt. The very ideas of dancing made her feel sick; but, of course, so she must, dance she must, and play her part as gaily and as smilingly as if she were not, in her own mind, standing on the very brink of a yawning grave—Hugh's grave—as if her dreams at night were not of scaffolds, and huge crowds of people with hard, pitiless faces, all bent on one figure—one figure known to her but too well.

No wonder that sleepless hours, and restless days, an ever-gnawing anxiety, made Eleanor pale and thin. Still it did not detract from her beauty; in fact, it gave it an ethereal spirituelle appearance, which was the one element it lacked to make it quite perfection; and as she entered the ball-room on her husband's arm, there was quite a low buzz of admiration as they made their way towards the upper end of the crowded room—a room hung with flags and flowers, decorated with stuffed foxes, hunting whips, horns and trophies of the chase, and gay with dozens of scarlet hunting coats, and not a few pretty dresses.

In this respect Lady Ravenhill outshone all rivals. She wore black this time—not white—a black satin and tulle dress fresh from the hands of a French milliner, and made as only a Frenchwoman can make, simply and yet so artistically that many an one tried to carry

away the pattern in their eye, and all in vain; those billows of tulle were manipulated in a manner that defied inspection. Five large diamond stars adorned the low corsage, a rivière of large single diamonds encircled her throat; the only colour about her ladyship was a huge trail on one side of the skirt of crimson passion flowers, and a monstrous crimson bouquet in her hand.

Little Mr. Digby, who was leaning the back of his ugly bullet head against the wall, watched the apparition passing up the room with the utmost complacency, and blinked his eyes with supreme satisfaction as he said to himself, "That pretty woman that carries her head so high, that everyone is raving about, is under my thumb, and worth ten thousand pounds to Thomas Digby, Esquire! Ha! ha! ha! Who would believe it?"

"Monstrous pretty!" murmured a disappointed, *bliss* young nobleman, who was lounging against the wall, glass in eye. "Who is she, Diggle?"

Diggle hated young Lord Firstflight in his heart, but, nevertheless, he, like the traditional Britisher, loved a peer. He liked to be seen talking to him intimately and confidentially in such public places as this; and he had reasons of his own for being well with a young man on whom his aristocratic neighbours looked with cold eyes of disapproval. He was a *roué*. He gambled, he drank, he was a black sheep all over, but wealthy; and many mothers and not a few daughters had endeavoured to reclaim him in vain.

In vain they spread their lines in the sight of that very prudent (in this particular only) and wary bird—Frederick, eighth Baron Firstflight.

Married ladies were, as he would have said himself, "his form," and he had carried confusion and disgrace into more than one household.

This pretty new beauty was his style all out, he confided to Mr. Digby, and he must try and fish out an introduction somehow.

Easier said than done, for scarcely one of the best families were on speaking terms with this runaway, and few, very few, were the respectable ladies of his acquaintance.

"She smiles too good for that fellow Ravenhill," he remarked to his companion, "and he's not a bit spoony on her either. To see them come in arm-in-arm, they looked like a pair of jibbing horses more than anything else, ready to bolt out of harness. I hate that beggar Ravenhill. Such a deuced stiff, imperious, black-looking brute! He cares for nothing but hunting! A pretty wife is thrown away on him! By George! would not he be in a wax if he saw me dancing with her! All the same, I'd give a tanner for an introduction to her this moment."

"Hand over your tanner, then," said Mr. Digby, with a grin of complacency, "for I'm your man. I know her."

"You! you be blessed!" said the other, insolently. "Why, she would not touch you with a ten-foot pole, much less speak to you! You are not in the same class."

Mr. Digby coloured with rage, but controlled himself with a great effort, and swallowed his ire.

"Nevertheless, you may take my word for it, she knows me, and will dance with you if I ask her," throwing immense significance on the personal pronoun.

"All right, then, fire away!" said the other. "Now's your time. She's standing over there under the orchestra with young Poltimore. Come now—away you go, and no shirking."

And off they went, this worthy couple; and making their way through the crowd with some difficulty at last came straight in front of the lady of whom they were in search.

She was looking at her bouquet with extraordinary attention, and did not appear to notice Mr. Digby, who stood bowing, and smiling, and rubbing his gloved hands before her in, as it were, an ecstasy of anticipation. Then she suddenly raised her head, levelled

her eyes at the lawyer before her, and administered the cut direct.

"No, no!" she said to herself, "know him here, speak to him in public, this vile torturer, who holds the sword of Damocles over Hugh's head!—never!"

(To be continued.)

In those who wish to be happy the passions must be cheerful and gay, not gloomy and melancholy. A propensity to hope and joy is real riches; to fear and sorrow, real poverty.

WINNING MANNERS.—Which will avail a young woman the more—a mind stored with the profoundest of fact lore concealed under an exterior timid, shrinking and hampered by a sense of self-consciousness, or a mind a little less stored, but united with that perfect ease and strength of bearing which conceals nothing, but illuminates all? Or, placing it on a higher or better ground, if it is the student's aim to put herself in a position to help others, as a lecturer, as a teacher, in a profession, in any avenue of life whatever—what mightier power can she bring to bear upon her work than address!

A SELF ESTIMATE.—It is a strange thing that mean people do not know that they are mean, but cherish a sincere conviction that they are the souls of generosity. You will hear them inveighing loudly against a neighbour who does not come up to the standard of a generous man, and decrying the sin of hoarding and withholding, without being sensible in the least that they are condemning themselves. They are usually people who are not given to self-criticism, and, if they were not amusing, they would be the most aggravating class alive.

ITALIAN WOMEN.—The popular idea of Italian women, when in their own sunny land, is that they spend their time, like Turkish sultanas, sleeping or lounging listlessly on soft couches, their only occupation being love-making, or perchance learning how to sing a love song. Never was there a greater mistake. Italian women, even in towns and in good circumstances, work harder than any other women I know. Not a stitch is done in the house that they do not do. They spin and make their own linen, rear their own silkworms, knit their own stockings and the stockings of their whole family, make their own dresses, hats, bonnets and cloaks, and superintend all the baking, cooking and cleaning of the house, if they do not positively do them themselves. They rarely go out, except on Sundays and holidays, and rarely receive visitors, unless in the highest society, where one day a week is set aside for receiving. They are perfect slaves to their husbands, whose comfort they study from morning until night. I have heard much of Italian illicit love-making, but I have never seen it. It may exist, perhaps, among the aristocracy, but in the middle and lower classes it is more imagination than reality. Brides, even in high society, still maintain the custom of making their own wedding outfits. A young friend of mine, who has just married, has brought her husband four dozens of every article of body and house linen, all made and embroidered with her own hands, even the lace which trims the house linen being of her own work. All the stockings, also, were knitted by herself. Nor is this the exception; it is the rule in Italy. Who, after this, shall say the Italian women are idlers? No one, certainly, who has known and seen them as I have will ever say so; on the contrary I would hold them up as models for all other women to imitate. Why, even in Rome, once the capitol of the world, the women spend their time between their house and church, varying these with an occasional walk on Sundays and great holidays, while everything in the house is done by themselves, and for the most part without a servant, servants being too expensive for most incomes nowadays.

GOLDEN GRAIN.

CHAPTER XVI.

A DREAM OF SUNSHINE.

It was as if the day had suddenly brightened as I saw the handsome young face and the bright eyes that I so well remembered; at first I was bewildered and dubious and could scarcely believe my own senses, as Harry Meredyth seized me by the hands, both of them, and expressed his delight in the old, boyish fashion at our meeting.

He had been such a thorough boy when I had last seen him, now he was a well-grown young man, erect of carriage and firm of step, and with a beard and moustache to boot. Those hirsute ornaments had been distinctly visible in the old Wassenhauser days, and I could see even then that he was not a little proud of them, but they had developed into a wealth of soft, curly brown hair, that quite altered the appearance of his face and made him look years older and more manly than he really was. He could not have been more than eighteen—certainly not many months more, if he had told me his real age when I met him in Germany, and he had all the appearance of a man of five or six-and-twenty.

The resemblance ceased with his appearance. At heart he was the same bright, impulsive boy as ever; and I think nothing will ever alter that trait in his character. If he lives to be eighty he will be as fresh-hearted as ever, and as outspoken. I looked at him with interest and almost affection. I had known so few friends in my life, and he and his family had come to take such a prominent place amongst them. There was nothing of the "gilded youth" about him; he was frank and natural, and took no more notice of Mrs. Craddock's astonishment than if that worthy lady had been a hundred miles away.

"To think of meeting you here!" he said, wringing my hands till I almost had to cry for quarter. "It's awfully jolly, isn't it, Miss Ormsby?"

"I think it would be awfully jolly to see you anywhere, Lord Henry!" I said, regardless of the fact that my employer was regarding me with looks of astonishment, to say the least of it, and that Miss Craddock at the piano was opening her mouth and her eyes in a fashion more expressive than pretty. I had forgotten all about her, or her mother either, and had gone away to the Rhine and the Lurley Rook, and was living over again all that had marked our first meeting.

"You know Miss Ormsby, Lord Henry?" she said, frigidly, when she thought, I suppose, that our rhapsodies at meeting again had lasted long enough.

"Know her, of course I do!" he replied, releasing my hand and turning round. "I beg your pardon, Mrs. Craddock. I have been awfully rude, but I was so surprised."

"Don't mention it," she said, more cordially. "I am glad to find Miss Ormsby has such pleasant acquaintances. I understood she was quite friendless, and it is rather surprising to find her on such very intimate terms with a young gentleman I know so well as I do you."

"Intimate! I should think we were!" he said, laughing. "I have known Miss Ormsby ever since she was at school. Mr. Fairchild and I fished her off a rock in the middle of the Rhine, and we have been fast friends ever since. Have we not, Miss Ormsby? I say, won't the pater be glad to hear of you again! He has often spoken of you since you went to America."

I think he mentioned his father's name to chase away any doubts Mrs. Craddock might have had. She had expressed none in words, but a woman can say so much with a tone; and hers said quite plainly that she did not believe that any former acquaintance I might have had with Harry Meredyth could by any possibility have been proper or becoming.

"I am just as glad to hear of his lordship," I said. "Are all the family well?"

"Yes, all as jolly as possible. We have lost one of our family circle since I saw you, though."

"Lost!" I echoed, wondering what he was going to say. Could he be going to say that his cousin was dead? I felt myself turning pale as I listened.

"I don't know that it was much loss either," Harry went on. He would never be Lord Henry to me—it came so much more naturally to call him Harry, even to myself. "It is only old Fairchild. I have got rid of my tutor, Miss Ormsby, and I am let loose upon society on my own hook. Don't you sympathise with me?"

"I don't think you need it," I said, laughing. "Mr. Fairchild seemed so much like a nightmare to me, that—"

"That's just it! He was a nightmare. I beg your pardon, Mrs. Craddock," suddenly turning round to my employer once more. "I am behaving like a bear to you, but—"

Mrs. Craddock had apparently turned over the state of things in her own mind, and resolved to be gracious. To offend Lord Henry Meredyth would cut her out of a good many pleasant things, for she was not quite in the thick of the best society—only hovering as it were on the outskirts, and her intimacy with the Earl of St. Colomb's family was her stronghold.

"Don't you think it would be better to defer the lessons till the afternoon to-day?" she said, graciously, to me; "or perhaps remit them altogether? You and Lord Henry will have a great deal to talk about, and he will do us the favour of lunching with us, I hope."

She swept out of the room, taking her daughter with her, and Harry Meredyth drew his chair close to mine, and once more expressed his delight at seeing me.

"Tell me all about it," he said. "How you came to be governess in this house. Isn't it lucky I should have the run of it? And how you got on in America, and everything."

"It would take a long time to tell you everything," I said, smiling at his vehemence. "I can sum it up at once. My journey was a failure, as far as its object was concerned. I did not find the people I wanted to, after all."

"And who were they?" he asked, and then stopped suddenly and begged my pardon.

"I had no business to ask such a question," he said. "Perhaps your journey was about private affairs?"

"So far private that it was connected with myself only," I replied, smiling at his perturbed face. "But no secret for all that. I went to try and find out something about my mother's family. She was an American—at least, she was brought up in New York, and resided there until her marriage."

"And you couldn't find her people? How unlucky!"

"I couldn't find anyone who could tell me what I wanted to know. I found the only relative she had in the world, but the fact of finding her was all. She had no information to give me on the point I wanted."

He did not question me any further. Perhaps he thought it might not be agreeable, and we turned the conversation to his own family. His father was just the same as ever, he said—the best-hearted old pater in the universe; and his mother did not look a day older than when I had seen her at Wassenhauser.

"She looks as young and fresh as if she were my sister instead of my mother," he said, with pride in his mother that made my heart ache with a desolate loneliness to hear him; "and I always say that the secret of it is that she does not try to look any younger than her years. She dresses and does her hair in a sensible fashion, and not like a girl of sixteen. Hilda and I are very proud of the mater, I can tell you."

I thought they might well be, remembering the gracious, kindly face that had shone on me in the old school garden, and the sweet voice that had asked me so gently about my future prospects. What a Heaven on earth life must be, I thought, with such a mother

as that! I felt my voice shake and my eyes fill with tears at the thought of such united love in a happy home, and I choked down my envious thoughts and asked after the Lady Hilda.

"She's the dearest little sister that ever lived," he said, warmly; "and the prettiest girl in the three kingdoms, that's what Hilda is. She'll make a sensation when she comes out."

"And that will be soon, I suppose?"

"Well! we are in no hurry. It will mean losing her, and we don't want to do that for many a long day. She is such a dear, sweet child now that it will be a sin to spoil her with the world's cynicism and ill-nature."

"I should like to see them all. It would be such a refresher to meet friends like them again."

"So you shall, be sure of it. They would like to see you. Now I have found you I am not going to lose you again in a hurry. You never told me how you came here, by-the-way."

"I came here through an advertisement. Mrs. Craddock wanted a governess and I came after the place, as the servant-girls say."

"Mrs. Craddock very often wants a governess, I have heard," Harry Meredith said, with a little laugh. "It is whispered that she is an awful nigger-driver. Is that true?"

"I am not going to tell tales out of school," I said, shaking my head at him, for I was fearful he might be overheard. "I am earning my living, and thankful to do so. You are emancipated, you say?"

"From old Fairchild! Yes, thank the powers! I had had enough of him. He has been my old man of the sea all my life."

"Your tutor, was he not?"

"He was everything, I think. He was tutor and adviser, and all sorts of things about our place. To give him his due, he was very clever, and taught me more, I fancy, than any other man could have done; but I did not like him for all that. It was a case of Dr. Fell, I suppose, for he was never harsh with me. If I did wrong, and there was a good deal of that in my career I can assure you, he always made me feel small somehow. I would far rather have been punished in the severest way."

It was just what I could have fancied from the look of the gentleman in question. I was strangely interested in hearing about him—I hardly knew why—and I most devoutly hoped we should never meet again; he had fascinated me uncomfortably. Whenever I thought of his dark face it was always with a curious gleam in his eyes that I had seen there for a brief moment when his pupil sprang after me on to the rock in the river.

"He hasn't gone away quite altogether," Harry said, pursuing the subject, "but he is no longer in command where I am concerned. You see he is a sort of connection of ours; at least, the pater took him when his father died and had him educated. His father and mine were great friends when they were young; and Mr. Fairchild lost all his money, and the boy would have been penniless if someone had not stepped in and helped him. He is much younger than he looks. I daresay you took him for a man of fifty or thereabouts, didn't you?"

"I think I did. I hardly recollect about that."

"Well, he's considerably under forty now, I don't believe he's thirty-nine, but he might be a hundred for wisdom and common sense, and all the moral and Christian virtues put together. I've made a compact with the dad that he is not to be held up to me for a pattern any more. If he is I shall turn out something so entirely different that I shall shock everybody! He is still the right hand in business matters—secretary, and so forth."

"And Mr. Meredith?" I said, suddenly.

"How is he?"

I had been screwing up my courage to ask the question all this time, and had not dared, for fear my face should betray how eagerly I longed for the answer.

"Oh, Hugh! He's very well. I haven't

seen him for some time. He's at Canterbury with his regiment."

"And unmarried?"

"Oh! yes. He's a bachelor still. Somehow I can't fancy Hugh married. My father is always at him about it. Says he ought to take a wife. He's awfully rich, you know—richer far than we are! But he says there's time enough. Talks all manner of rubbish about waiting till there's only one woman on the face of the earth for him, and then asking her. And somehow or other I fancy that's the case now."

"You think he is engaged?"

"Good gracious! No: I am sure he isn't. It's an idea of his, and that's all; and I tell him he'll come to grief. Perhaps the one woman might turn out to have one man in the same fashion, and that one not cousin Hugh! What would he do then?"

"It would be awkward!" I replied, as Mrs. Craddock came in to summon us to luncheon, which had been spread with greater care than usual.

The appointments were not always very precise, I was told, when there was no one expected, and strange dishes and odd scraps found their way to the table.

She must have worried her book pretty severely, I think, for there were several dishes on the table evidently made up in a hurry, and she herself looked flushed and heated. She was very gracious, notwithstanding, and bade me be seated, quite as if I had been a friend of the family instead of her miserably paid daily governess.

CHAPTER XVII.

HARRY.

THAT luncheon seemed like a dream to me. It was so long since I had met with any kindness, except from dear old Mrs. Manders and Mary, that Harry Meredith's fresh gladness at seeing me, and his warm-hearted tones and looks seemed almost unreal, and Mrs. Craddock's wonderful amiability and condescension were too wonderful to be real.

She chatted and laughed, and cast looks of warning at her daughter when that young lady almost audibly expressed her amazement at her change of manner to me, and spoke of me to Harry as "dear Miss Ormsby" till I felt inclined to pinch myself under the table to make quite sure that I was awake. Magdalen Ormsby, a friend of Lord Henry Meredith, was a very different person indeed from the "young person" whom she had engaged, as she was fond of telling her friends without references, and therefore very cheaply as governess to her children.

I gave myself up to the enjoyment of the hour, and was happy and bright, too; and the meal passed away with lively chat and laughter, coming to an end all too soon, for when it was over Harry said he must go.

"I ought not to have stayed half as long," he said, "and that's a fact! But it was meeting with Miss Ormsby here. It was awfully jolly, don't you know!"

He stopped short, and perceived that his speech was hardly complimentary to Mrs. Craddock and her daughter, and he apologized with boyish frankness.

"You must excuse her and me, too!" he said. "We have been monopolizing the talk, I know. It won't happen again, when we have seen each other a little oftener. I shall come and see you again very soon—that is, if Mrs. Craddock has no objection," he added, hastily, for a black cloud had come over the lady's face. She was favouring me with a look the reverse of amiable, and he caught it *en passant*.

It vanished instantly as he spoke, and she replied at once that she should be very happy to see him at any time, and bade him adieu in her most gracious manner, turning to me when he had finally disappeared with a look of wonder, and something of displeasure as well.

"I was not aware you knew Lord Henry, Miss Ormsby!" she said.

"I was not aware you did, madame," I replied, with a smile. "I have not seen him for a long time, and I did not expect to meet him here."

"Oh, we are very intimate with the family. I am almost surprised they have never mentioned you in any way!"

This was a fib on the good lady's part. She was not very intimate with the Earl's people, though she could claim acquaintance with them, and Harry had the run of her house. She asked me a good many questions about them, which I answered as far as was necessary. There was no secrecy about my knowledge of them, as she seemed to think, and the subject was dropped for the present.

Harry kept his word, and came again and again, till I could see that Mrs. Craddock was angry and jealous, in that his visits were so unmistakably made to me and not to her. I was obliged to take him to task and tell him he must not interrupt the studies of the Craddock olive-branches in the fashion he did.

Mrs. Craddock chose to make two or three very disagreeable speeches about our intimacy, but I think I managed to satisfy even her that there was no shadow of anything more than friendship between us.

I hardly think I understood what I felt for Harry Meredith. I never had the faintest notion of falling in love with him, in the ordinary acceptance of the term. He seemed such a boy beside me, with my experience of the rough side of the world. But, for all that, I did love him.

I used to look at him and think that I should have felt just so to a brother if it had pleased Heaven to bestow one on me.

Harry mended his ways as far as spoiling my school-hours were concerned; but he made up for it by getting as much of my society at other times as he possibly could.

He was alone in London. His family were in the country, and he discovered that most of my afternoons were free from a certain time, and that I was eligible as a companion for all sorts of outings and little bits of pleasure that would never have come my way if I had been left to myself.

"It's doing me good as well as you, you know!" he said to me one day, when he had persuaded me to go to a matinee with him and forget for an hour or two that there was such a place as Grosvenor Gardens, or such a person as Mrs. Wortley Craddock in existence. "If I hadn't found you out I should have spent the time in all sorts of things that my mother and the pater would have turned up the whites of their eyes at!"

"I hope not!" I said, laughing.

"Oh, but I should! You don't know what a wild fellow I am when I am left to myself; I do get into such scrapes!"

"Perhaps Lady St. Columb might think me a scrape too!" I said, looking at his eager face and thinking what a pity it would be if he fell into the hands of any designing woman.

He was too good to be wasted like that; and how many bright, open-hearted boys are? The thought of his mother and father had come upon me quite suddenly, and all at once I thought perhaps they might not like to hear of his befriending me in the way he was doing, for it was an act of friendship to brighten my life as he was doing.

I had no scruple in accepting the treats from him, as far as expense went. That was nothing to him, he knew very well, and I avoided anything that would lead to much money-spending. But hitherto I had never given a thought to what anyone else would think, nor to the fact that to outsiders our intimacy might look like love-making. We were so utterly free from any thought of it ourselves that we were careless, perhaps; but I should have been as much astonished if Harry had uttered a word of love to me as if a brother had spoken, and I think he felt just the same towards me.

"My mother does not think you a scrape," he replied, to my words. "I told her I had met you, and how jolly it was; and she said

that she was glad to hear of you, and hoped I should show you all the kindness I could. She and the governor were mightily taken with you when we saw you at that German place, and they will be glad to see you again when they come to town, I know."

"They are very kind," I said, much relieved to hear that he had told them of our friendship. It would stop the tongues of such people as Mrs. Craddock, who had left off mentioning Harry to me for some time.

I was very happy in all this. My duties with the threesome children seemed ever so much lighter for the knowledge that perhaps after a weary morning with them I should go to some concert or picture-gallery with him, and while away the afternoon in rest and amusement at the same time.

Now and then he showed me letters from home, wherein my name was mentioned with kindly interest in my well-being, that made me feel as if the world were not quite so hollow and miserable.

I think I saw all the nights of London and the neighbourhood that could be compassed of an afternoon during the time that Harry came to see me and take me out; and he always managed to shield me from any remarks, and to let everyone see, as far as he could, how completely fraternal our friendship was.

Mrs. Craddock, very silent for a long time, at length took me to task. She was all graciousness at first, after Harry's visit to her house and his recognition of me. But it seemed to me that she grew cooler and more silent, and, at the same time, excessively exacting as the time wore on.

It did not trouble me much, for with the new happiness of having someone to talk to, and the pleasure of seeing a little of the world outside her house and my own secluded lodging, I felt the worry of the children less, and was better able to cope with their tempers and indolence.

She did not hint at anything, but gave me a long lecture, the drift of which I imagined to be that I was neglecting my duties in some way, and that the children were not getting on as well as they ought to have done.

I made up my mind that I would not take so much pleasure for the future, and that I would see less of Harry Meredith. Perhaps Mrs. Craddock was right, and that I did go out too much and so lose taste for my duties. I would give it up—at least, in part. And the next time Harry came for me to go out with him I told him so, to his great disgust.

"That old cut of a woman has been at you, I suppose," he said, more frankly than politely. "What has she to do with the way you spend your spare time? She is not your keeper!"

"No; but I dare say I am not so brisk at my work as I ought to be. I must attend to it better."

I would not let him reason me out of my resolution, and for some time I went out with him no more, to his great disgust and my own sorrow, for I had enjoyed our intercourse so much. And his time hung heavy on his hands. I knew he did not care for many pursuits of young men of his age, and most of his friends were away. He was really attending to some business for his father, but it only took up a few hours in the day, so escorting me about and witnessing my pleasure at seeing things for the first time had been a great treat to him.

I did not cast him off altogether, and one day, a month or so after I had virtuously resolved to have no more nice outings for the present, he came and persuaded me to go to Kew with him.

Some rare plants had just arrived, and everybody was flocking to see them and the houses that had been put up for their accommodation. A very good band was to be there, too, and some excellent music was to be discoursed.

I was rather out of spirits, pining for sunshine and greenery, and I allowed myself to be persuaded, and I put on my smartest dress and hat and went, resolved to leave all my

cares and worries behind me, for that afternoon at least.

I was conscious of looking my best, for I had managed to buy myself a new hat and dress only a week or two before, and they became me.

It was very nice to feel that Harry need not be ashamed of me, and almost his first word of greeting when he came for me was to tell me how pretty I looked.

"You are as bonny as any of the mater's friends," he said. "I should like to see you at Court, Magdalen. Your style of beauty would become a Court train and fixings."

"Is that the way you talk of a lady's ornaments?" I asked, laughing, as he handed me into the carriage he had insisted on bringing for me.

I went out so seldom with him now, he declared, that I should go respectfully; and the drive to Kew was so much prettier than going down by railroad.

There were a good many people about the gardens that afternoon—Kew was the fashion that season—and we wandered about enjoying ourselves, and thinking only of the enjoyment of the present moment, till my pleasure was somewhat rudely broken in upon by the sound of a voice I knew very well.

"Lord Henry—you here! We have not seen you for a long time!" and Mrs. Craddock and her eldest daughter stood before us.

We were sitting lazily—for we had grown rather tired—under a cedar, and I have no doubt that we looked to the good lady like a pair of lovers instead of the simple friends that we were.

I saw the anger in her face, but I took no notice of it, and was going to speak to her, when she literally turned her back upon me, and begged the favour of a word with Harry.

It was only a sentence or two that passed between them, and then she walked away without so much as noticing my existence.

"There'll be a blow up to-morrow if you go to your duties," Harry said, as he came back to his seat. "She didn't like seeing us together. She's not a pleasant woman, that Mrs. Craddock of yours, Magdalen."

"No, but she is my mistress," I said, with a sigh.

It was a good thing our pleasant afternoon was nearly over, for the meeting had completely taken away all my delight in it, and very soon we left the gardens and went back to town.

I had a presentiment of evil when I started for Grosvenor-gardens the next morning, and when the pompous footman met me in the hall with a message from his mistress I knew I had an ordeal to go through that would take all my courage to meet.

"Mrs. Craddock wishes to speak to you," he said, in his most disagreeable manner, and I knew instinctively that all the household knew that their lady had seen me at Kew with Harry Meredith.

I had done nothing wrong, but I knew how such a thing could be twisted by a spiteful woman, and what Mrs. Craddock would be likely to make of it.

"I wish to speak to you before you go into the schoolroom, Miss Ormsby," she said, in her most disagreeable manner. "I should like some little explanation of what I saw yesterday."

"As how, madame?" I asked. "I don't know that I have done anything that needs explanation."

"Excuse me, Miss Ormsby, I think you have. I mean your conduct with regard to Lord Henry Meredith. I hear on all hands how he is entangling himself with you."

"Madame!"

I could hardly speak in my indignation. It was so far from the truth, and yet I hardly realised how likely it was for other people to think as she did.

"Don't interrupt me, if you please," she said, icily. "It is entanglement when a young man of family and position falls into the hands of a girl older than himself, and takes her about

and spends his money on her. Do you think it was a becoming thing in a person of your position to allow Lord Henry to take you out attired in that ridiculous aping of fashion, and to loiter about with you in a public garden as if you were engaged lovers? You are surely not vain enough to think that the young gentleman will marry you!"

"What Lord Henry Meredith does is his business," I said, almost too indignant to speak with any sort of calmness, "and what I do with myself out of your school-hours is mine."

"Miss Ormsby, you are insolent!"

"I have no intention of being so, madame; but this is a matter with which you have nothing at all to do."

"I shall write to Lady St. Colomb and warn her."

I smiled as I thought of the letter Harry had shown me, and I bade her do so if she liked, adding that, as she had such a poor opinion of me as to think I was disgracing myself by accepting presents from a young gentleman who was only playing with me, I had better resign my situation as her governess.

"I am perfectly innocent of all that you have insinuated and laid to my charge," I said. "I will not even attempt to justify myself—it would be useless."

"Quite!"

"Then we had better part. I should have no authority over children whose mother spoke to them of me with contempt. I shall feel obliged if you will suit yourself at once."

She was hardly prepared for this, and wanted me to stay another week, but my temper was moved now, and I refused to enter the schoolroom again. So my salary was paid me with scrupulous exactness, and I left the house free, but with the world before me once more to face as I could.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AN OFFER.

I DON'T think I realized quite what it would mean to me when I left Mrs. Craddock's house. She had insulted me very cruelly, and accused me of things that had never entered my head. Harry Meredith was nothing to me in the light she imagined—never would be; though she was not to understand that, only my own heart could speak truthfully about that—and I had done no wrong.

It was hard that I could not have a friend, even if he were a handsome young man, whom all the single girls of the season were setting their caps at. Perhaps Mrs. Craddock had some just cause for her indignation; for certainly since Harry had discovered me at her house, her daughter and herself had been very secondary attractions. Mrs. Manders was full of wonder when I returned home—sooner than usual, and told her that I had thrown up my situation.

"You don't mean she has turned you away, my dear?" she said, interested and sympathising. "I am sure if she has she will regret it; there are not many girls who would have put up with her whims as you have done."

"I have turned myself away," I said. "Mrs. Craddock insulted me beyond bearing, and I could not stay."

"Did she, though? What are you going to do now?"

"Look out for something else. Surely I shall find something before long; I don't despair."

"If you have offended her—" Mrs. Manders began.

"She won't give me a character as the servant-girls say," I replied, trying to make light of the predicament which I was beginning to comprehend, now that I had cooled down a little. "No, I know she won't. She looks on me as unfit to teach her children. She accused me of light conduct, and of allowing gentlemen, or rather a gentleman, to purchase my clothes for me. I could not even give her any answer or explanation, I was so indignant, and I proposed we should part."

as that! I felt my voice shake and my eyes fill with tears at the thought of such united love in a happy home, and I choked down my envious thoughts and asked after the Lady Hilda.

"She's the dearest little sister that ever lived," he said, warmly; "and the prettiest girl in the three kingdoms, that's what Hilda is. She'll make a sensation when she comes out."

"And that will be soon, I suppose?"

"Well! we are in no hurry. It will mean losing her, and we don't want to do that for many a long day. She is such a dear, sweet child now that it will be a sin to spoil her with the world's cynicism and ill-nature."

"I should like to see them all. It would be such a refresher to meet friends like them again."

"So you shall, be sure of it. They would like to see you. Now I have found you I am not going to lose you again in a hurry. You never told me how you came here, by-the-way."

"I came here through an advertisement. Mrs. Craddock wanted a governess and I came after the place, as the servant-girls say."

"Mrs. Craddock very often wants a governess, I have heard," Harry Meredith said, with a little laugh. "It is whispered that she is an awful nigger-driver. Is that true?"

"I am not going to tell tales out of school," I said, shaking my head at him, for I was fearful he might be overheard. "I am earning my living, and thankful to do so. You are emancipated, you say?"

"From old Fairchild! Yes, thank the powers! I had had enough of him. He has been my old man of the sea all my life."

"Your tutor, was he not?"

"He was everything, I think. He was tutor and adviser, and all sorts of things about our place. To give him his due, he was very clever, and taught me more, I fancy, than any other man could have done; but I did not like him for all that. It was a case of Dr. Fell, I suppose, for he was never harsh with me. If I did wrong, and there was a good deal of that in my career I can assure you, he always made me feel small somehow. I would far rather have been punished in the severest way."

It was just what I could have fancied from the look of the gentleman in question. I was strangely interested in hearing about him—I hardly knew why—and I most devoutly hoped we should never meet again; he had fascinated me uncomfortably. Whenever I thought of his dark face it was always with a curious gleam in his eyes that I had seen there for a brief moment when his pupil sprang after me on to the rock in the river.

"He hasn't gone away quite altogether," Harry said, pursuing the subject, "but he is no longer in command where I am concerned. You see he is a sort of connection of ours; at least, the pater took him when his father died and had him educated. His father and mine were great friends when they were young; and Mr. Fairchild lost all his money, and the boy would have been penniless if someone had not stepped in and helped him. He is much younger than he looks. I daresay you took him for a man of fifty or thereabouts, didn't you?"

"I think I did. I hardly recollect about that."

"Well, he's considerably under forty now. I don't believe he's thirty-nine, but he might be a hundred for wisdom and common sense, and all the moral and Christian virtues put together. I've made a compact with the dad that he is not to be held up to me for a pattern any more. If he is I shall turn out something so entirely different that I shall shock everybody! He is still the right hand in business matters—secretary, and so forth."

"And Mr. Meredith?" I said, suddenly.

"How is he?"

I had been screwing up my courage to ask the question all this time, and had not dared, for fear my face should betray how eagerly I longed for the answer.

"Oh, Hugh! He's very well. I haven't

seen him for some time. He's at Canterbury with his regiment."

"And unmarried?"

"Oh! yes. He's a bachelor still. Somehow I can't fancy Hugh married. My father is always at him about it. Says he ought to take a wife. He's awfully rich, you know—richer far than we are! But he says there's time enough. Talks all manner of rubbish about waiting till there's only one woman on the face of the earth for him, and then asking her. And somehow or other I fancy that's the case now."

"You think he is engaged?"

"Good gracious! no; I am sure he isn't. It's an idea of his, and that's all; and I tell him he'll come to grief. Perhaps the one woman might turn out to have one man in the same fashion, and that one not cousin Hugh! What would he do then?"

"It would be awkward!" I replied, as Mrs. Craddock came in to summon us to luncheon, which had been spread with greater care than usual.

The appointments were not always very precise, I was told, when there was no one expected, and strange dishes and odd scraps found their way to the table.

She must have worried her cook pretty severely, I think, for there were several dishes on the table evidently made up in a hurry, and she herself looked flushed and heated. She was very gracious, notwithstanding, and bade me be seated, quite as if I had been a friend of the family instead of her miserably paid daily governess.

CHAPTER XVII.

HARRY.

THAT luncheon seemed like a dream to me. It was so long since I had met with any kindness, except from dear old Mrs. Manders and Mary, that Harry Meredith's fresh gladness at seeing me, and his warm-hearted tones and looks seemed almost unreal, and Mrs. Craddock's wonderful amiability and condescension were too wonderful to be real.

She chatted and laughed, and cast looks of warning at her daughter when that young lady almost audibly expressed her amazement at her change of manner to me, and spoke of me to Harry as "dear Miss Ormsby" till I felt inclined to pinch myself under the table to make quite sure that I was awake. Magdalen Ormsby, a friend of Lord Henry Meredith, was a very different person indeed from the "young person" whom she had engaged, as she was fond of telling her friends without references, and therefore very cheaply as governess to her children.

I gave myself up to the enjoyment of the hour, and was happy and bright, too; and the meal passed away with lively chit-chat and laughter, coming to an end all too soon, for when it was over Harry said he must go.

"I ought not to have stayed half as long," he said, "and that's a fact! But it was meeting with Miss Ormsby here. It was awfully jolly, don't you know?"

He stopped short, and perceived that his speech was hardly complimentary to Mrs. Craddock and her daughter, and he apologized with boyish frankness.

"You must excuse her and me, too!" he said. "We have been monopolizing the talk, I know. It won't happen again, when we have seen each other a little oftener. I shall come and see you again very soon—that is, if Mrs. Craddock has no objection," he added, hastily, for a black cloud had come over the lady's face. She was favouring me with a look the reverse of amiable, and he caught it *en passant*.

It vanished instantly as he spoke, and she replied at once that she should be very happy to see him at any time, and bade him adieu in her most gracious manner, turning to me when he had finally disappeared with a look of wonder, and something of displeasure as well.

"I was not aware you knew Lord Henry, Miss Ormsby!" she said.

"I was not aware you did, madame," I replied, with a smile. "I have not seen him for a long time, and I did not expect to meet him here."

"Oh, we are very intimate with the family. I am almost surprised they have never mentioned you in any way!"

This was a fib on the good lady's part. She was not very intimate with the Earl's people, though she could claim acquaintance with them, and Harry had the run of her house. She asked me a good many questions about them, which I answered as far as was necessary. There was no secrecy about my knowledge of them, as she seemed to think, and the subject was dropped for the present.

Harry kept his word, and came again and again, till I could see that Mrs. Craddock was angry and jealous, in that his visits were so unmistakably made to me and not to her. I was obliged to take him to task and tell him he must not interrupt the studies of the Craddock olive-branches in the fashion he did.

Mrs. Craddock chose to make two or three very disagreeable speeches about our intimacy, but I think I managed to satisfy even her that there was no shadow of anything more than friendship between us.

I hardly think I understood what I felt for Harry Meredith. I never had the faintest notion of falling in love with him, in the ordinary acceptance of the term. He seemed such a boy beside me, with my experience of the rough side of the world. But, for all that, I did love him.

I used to look at him and think that I should have felt just so to a brother if it had pleased Heaven to bestow one on me.

Harry mended his ways as far as spoiling my school-hours were concerned; but he made up for it by getting as much of my society at other times as he possibly could.

He was alone in London. His family were in the country, and he discovered that most of my afternoons were free from a certain time, and that I was eligible as a companion for all sorts of outings and little bits of pleasure that would never have come my way if I had been left to myself.

"It's doing me good as well as you, you know!" he said to me one day, when he had persuaded me to go to a matinee with him and forget for an hour or two that there was such a place as Grosvenor Gardens, or such a person as Mrs. Wortley Craddock in existence. "If I hadn't found you out I should have spent the time in all sorts of things that my mother and the pater would have turned up the whites of their eyes at!"

"I hope not!" I said, laughing. "Oh, but I should! You don't know what a wild fellow I am when I am left to myself; I do get into such scrapes!"

"Perhaps Lady St. Colomb might think me a scrape too!" I said, looking at his eager face and thinking what a pity it would be if he fell into the hands of any designing woman.

He was too good to be wasted like that; and how many bright, open-hearted boys are? The thought of his mother and father had come upon me quite suddenly, and all at once I thought perhaps they might not like to hear of his befriending me in the way he was doing, for it was an act of friendship to brighten my life as he was doing.

I had no scruple in accepting the treats from him, as far as expense went. That was nothing to him, he knew very well, and I avoided anything that would lead to much money-expending. But hitherto I had never given a thought to what anyone else would think, nor to the fact that to outsiders our intimacy might look like love-making. We were so utterly free from any thought of ourselves that we were careless, perhaps; but I should have been as much astonished if Harry had uttered a word of love to me as if a brother had spoken, and I think he felt just the same towards me.

"My mother does not think you a scrape," he replied, to my words. "I told her I had met you, and how jolly it was; and she said

that she was glad to hear of you, and hoped I should show you all the kindness I could. She and the governor were mightily taken with you when we saw you at that German place, and they will be glad to see you again when they come to town, I know."

"They are very kind," I said, much relieved to hear that he had told them of our friendship. It would stop the tongues of such people as Mrs. Craddock, who had left mentioning Harry to me for some time.

I was very happy in all this. My duties with the tiresome children seemed ever so much lighter for the knowledge that perhaps after a weary morning with them I should go to some concert or picture-gallery with him, and while away the afternoon in rest and amusement at the same time.

Now and then he showed me letters from home, wherein my name was mentioned with kindly interest in my well-being, that made me feel as if the world were not quite so hollow and miserable.

I think I saw all the sights of London and the neighbourhood that could be compassed of an afternoon during the time that Harry came to see me and take me out; and he always managed to shield me from any remarks, and to let everyone see, as far as he could, how completely fraternal our friendship was.

Mrs. Craddock, very silent for a long time, at length took me to task. She was all graciousness at first, after Harry's visit to her house and his recognition of me. But it seemed to me that she grew cooler and more silent, and, at the same time, excessively exacting as the time wore on.

It did not trouble me much, for with the new happiness of having someone to talk to, and the pleasure of seeing a little of the world outside her home and my own secluded lodging, I felt the worry of the children less, and was better able to cope with their tempers and indulgence.

She did not hint at anything, but gave me a long lecture, the drift of which I imagined to be that I was neglecting my duties in some way, and that the children were not getting on as well as they ought to have done.

I made up my mind that I would not take so much pleasure for the future, and that I would see less of Harry Meredyth. Perhaps Mrs. Craddock was right, and that I did go out too much and so less taste for my duties. I would give it up—at least, in part. And the next time Harry came for me to go out with him I told him so, to his great disgust.

"That odd sort of a woman has been at you, I suppose," he said, more frankly than politely. "What has she to do with the way you spend your spare time? She is not your keeper!"

"No; but I dare say I am not so brisk at my work as I ought to be. I must attend to it better."

I would not let him reason me out of my resolution, and for some time I went out with him no more, to his great disgust and my own sorrow, for I had enjoyed our intercourse so much. And his time hung heavy on his hands. I knew he did not care for many pursuits of young men of his age, and most of his friends were away. He was really attending to some business for his father, but it only took up a few hours in the day, so escorting me about and witnessing my pleasure at seeing things for the first time had been a great treat to him.

I did not cast him off altogether, and one day, a month or so after I had virtuously resolved to have no more nice outings for the present, he came and persuaded me to go to Kew with him.

Some rare plants had just arrived, and everybody was flocking to see them and the houses that had been put up for their accommodation. A very good band was to be there, too, and some excellent music was to be discoursed.

I was rather out of spirits, pining for sunshine and greenery, and I allowed myself to be persuaded, and I put on my smartest dress and hat and went, resolved to leave all my

cares and worries behind me, for that afternoon at least.

I was conscious of looking my best, for I had managed to buy myself a new hat and dress only a week or two before, and they became me.

It was very nice to feel that Harry need not be ashamed of me, and almost his first word of greeting when he came for me was to tell me how pretty I looked.

"You are as bonny as any of the master's friends," he said. "I should like to see you at Court, Magdalen. Your style of beauty would become a Court train and fixings."

"Is that the way you talk of a lady's ornaments?" I asked, laughing, as he handed me into the carriage he had insisted on bringing for me.

I went out so seldom with him now, he declared, that I should go respectably; and the drive to Kew was so much prettier than going down by railroad.

There were a good many people about the gardens that afternoon—Kew was the fashion that season—and we wandered about enjoying ourselves, and thinking only of the enjoyment of the present moment, till my pleasure was somewhat rudely broken in upon by the sound of a voice I knew very well.

"Lord Henry—you here! We have not seen you for a long time!" and Mrs. Craddock and her eldest daughter stood before us.

We were sitting lazily—for we had grown rather tired—under a cedar, and I have no doubt that we looked to the good lady like a pair of lovers instead of the simple friends that we were.

I saw the anger in her face, but I took no notice of it, and was going to speak to her, when she literally turned her back upon me, and begged the favour of a word with Harry.

It was only a sentence or two that passed between them, and then she walked away without so much as noticing my existence.

"There'll be a blow up to-morrow if you go to your duties," Harry said, as he came back to his seat. "She didn't like seeing us together. She's not a pleasant woman, that Mrs. Craddock of yours, Magdalen."

"No, but she is my mistress," I said, with a sigh.

It was a good thing our pleasant afternoon was nearly over, for the meeting had completely taken away all my delight in it, and very soon we left the gardens and went back to town.

I had a presentiment of evil when I started for Grosvenor-gardens the next morning, and when the pompous footman met me in the hall with a message from his mistress I knew I had an ordeal to go through that would take all my courage to meet.

"Mrs. Craddock wishes to speak to you," he said, in his most disagreeable manner, and I knew instinctively that all the household knew that their lady had seen me at Kew with Harry Meredyth.

I had done nothing wrong, but I knew how such a thing could be twisted by a spiteful woman, and what Mrs. Craddock would be likely to make of it.

"I wish to speak to you before you go into the schoolroom, Miss Ormsby," she said, in her most disagreeable manner. "I should like some little explanation of what I saw yesterday."

"As how, madame?" I asked. "I don't know that I have done anything that needs explanation."

"Excuse me, Miss Ormsby, I think you have. I mean your conduct with regard to Lord Henry Meredyth. I hear on all hands how he is entangling himself with you."

"Madame!"

I could hardly speak in my indignation. It was so far from the truth, and yet I hardly realised how likely it was for other people to think as she did.

"Don't interrupt me, if you please," she said, icily. "It is entanglement when a young man of family and position falls into the hands of a girl older than himself, and takes her about

and spends his money on her. Do you think it was a becoming thing in a person of your position to allow Lord Henry to take you out strolled in that ridiculous aping of fashion, and to loiter about with you in a public garden as if you were engaged lovers? You are surely not vain enough to think that the young gentleman will marry you!"

"What Lord Henry Meredyth does is his business," I said, almost too indignant to speak with any sort of calmness, "and what I do with myself out of your school-hours is mine."

"Miss Ormsby, you are insolent!"

"I have no intention of being so, madame; but this is a matter with which you have nothing at all to do."

"I shall write to Lady St. Colomb and warn her."

I smiled as I thought of the letter Harry had shown me, and I bade her do so if she liked, adding that, as she had such a poor opinion of me as to think I was disgracing myself by accepting presents from a young gentleman who was only playing with me, I had better resign my situation as her governess.

"I am perfectly innocent of all that you have insinuated and laid to my charge," I said. "I will not even attempt to justify myself—it would be useless."

"Quite!"

"Then we had better part. I should have no authority over children whose mother spoke to them of me with contempt. I shall feel obliged if you will suit yourself at once."

She was hardly prepared for this, and wanted me to stay another week, but my temper was moved now, and I refused to enter the schoolroom again. So my salary was paid me with scrupulous exactness, and I left the house free, but with the world before me once more to face as I could.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN OFFER.

I don't think I realized quite what it would mean to me when I left Mrs. Craddock's house. She had insulted me very cruelly, and accused me of things that had never entered my head. Harry Meredyth was nothing to me in the light she imagined—never would be; though she was not to understand that, only my own heart could speak truthfully about that—and I had done no wrong.

It was hard that I could not have a friend, even if he were a handsome young man, whom all the single girls of the season were setting their caps at. Perhaps Mrs. Craddock had some just cause for her indignation; for certainly since Harry had discovered me at her house, her daughter and herself had been very secondary attractions. Mrs. Manders was full of wonder when I returned home sooner than usual, and told her that I had thrown up my situation.

"You don't mean she has turned you away, my dear?" she said, interested and sympathising. "I am sure if she has she will regret it; there are not many girls who would have put up with her whims as you have done."

"I have turned myself away," I said. "Mrs. Craddock insulted me beyond bearing, and I could not stay."

"Did she, though? What are you going to do now?"

"Look out for something else. Surely I shall find something before long; I don't despair."

"If you have offended her—" Mrs. Manders began.

"She won't give me a character as the servant-girls say," I replied, trying to make light of the predicament which I was beginning to comprehend, now that I had cooled down a little. "No, I know she won't. She looks on me as unfit to teach her children. She accused me of light conduct, and of allowing gentlemen, or rather a gentleman, to purchase my clothes for me. I could not even give her any answer or explanation, I was so indignant, and I proposed we should part."

"You could not do anything else that I can see," Mrs. Manders said, but with a doubtful look on her kind old face. "Won't you tell me about it, my dear? How has it all come about? Is it on account of that young gentleman who has come here once or twice for you?"

"Yes."

"I thought as much. You see people will talk, and I have been asked more than once if he is your sweetheart."

"That he isn't!" I replied, a little vexed at myself for having given rise to any gossip on the subject at all. "He is more like a brother than anything else. He and his have been very kind to me, and it is a little hard that I cannot enjoy the smallest bit of pleasure without people making it into harm. Mrs. Craddock was kind enough to say I was trying to entrap him, and to propose to write and tell his mother."

"And you don't mind that?"

"Not in the least; nor he either. If the lady sticks to facts, she will have no harm to tell. If she does not, I do not think Lady St. Colomb will believe her. I hope she will not."

I think it was a relief to Mrs. Manders, good soul, that I was so perfectly open and straightforward in speaking to her about it. But she gave me a word of caution about being careful, and hinted how censorious the world was, and after she had gone from my room I fell into a train of thought about all that had happened to me, and wondered whether in very deed I had given any cause for such misinterpretation of my actions—whether I had compromised Harry in any way.

I would rather never see him again than make things unpleasant for him in the slightest degree, and I made up my mind I would not see him any more. I sighed as I thought it. It had been so nice to have him come and fetch me away from myself, as it were, and take me into a land of enjoyment and ease, if it was only for a few hours, and I had to return to my second floor back and my frugal fare immediately afterwards. I would have no more of it; he should keep to his own sphere, and I would remain in mine. The dreams and the enjoyment would grow too enthralling else, and I should wake from it all some day unfit for the sterner duties of life.

I must put him away from me, and the remembrance of all his kindness, and the thoughts of the other Meredyth, whose face was always present with me. Who was I, Magdalen Ormsby, that I should have fancies and thoughts like these? Wealth and station were not for me—the daughter of a betrayed and deserted wife, and without any knowledge of my father, on whom I had vowed to be revenged for my mother's sake. I was a social pariah, and all but nameless creature, with no ties, no future, except what I could make for myself.

I was in the midst of a reverie about all this one dismal day about a week after Mrs. Craddock had so unceremoniously accused me of improper conduct. I was thinking of my wasted life, and how I had failed in the search I had undertaken, and the tears were in my eyes at many a sad memory, when I was startled out of all reason by a step in the room, and Harry Meredyth stood before me.

"They wanted to tell me you wouldn't see me," he said, holding out his hand. "But I knew better, and I made the slaves let me come up. I say, does she usually wear all the black-lead in the establishment for rouge? It's not becoming."

"I suppose she has been cleaning the grates!" I said, laughing, in spite of my tears at his bright, boyish way. "I told them to say I could not see anyone, and I never thought of your coming here. I thought—"

"You thought I should find you had left that old—well, I won't call her names, though there isn't one hard enough for her—and never trouble about what had become of you. I've come straight from Grovenorgardens; I've been out of town, and only came

back last night, and when I went there this morning they told me you were gone."

"And what else did they say?"

"Well, not much, Mrs. C.—turned up her eyes and said she would rather not enter into that subject with me. Your conduct had been anything but prudent. It was not my fault, she dare say, but unpleasant things had been said, and, on the whole, she had thought it better to part with you, not desiring the example good for her girls."

"She has the power to say things that I cannot refute," I said, very much inclined to burst into tears. I was depressed and downhearted, and the world was so hard. "She accused me of letting you buy my clothes," I said, "and said I was trying to entrap you. You must not come to see me any more, Lord Henry. I can understand now how people will talk about the simplest thing."

"People are fools!" he burst out impetuously. "I shall come and see you all the more."

"No, you mustn't," I replied. "That would only be to give the reason for their gossip; it is the best for both of us that you should give me up. You have been very good to me, and I shall never forget your kindness, but I must not stand in your way."

"You don't stand in my way. You have kept me from all sorts of evil, and I won't be bullied by an old cat like that into doing what I don't like. We'll go to the Crystal Palace this very day."

"No, we won't, we'll shake hands and part; our two ways in life lie so very wide apart. It is no use to try and make them go side by side."

"Very well, we shall see. But what are you going to do? You are not going to keep me in the dark as to what becomes of you, are you?"

"No," I said, sadly, "but I have hardly made up my mind. Of course, I shall try for another situation."

"And of course Mrs. Craddock will put in her spoke, and say she cannot recommend you. I know her, she will be very sorry, and turn up her eyes, and all the time say something that will effectually prevent any one taking you."

"Yes," I said, "I know all that. But I must try in spite of it. If I cannot succeed, I think I will go back to Wassenhauser. Madame Lowenthal will give me something and my board as under music-teacher. She has professors for finishing."

"And you might as well be buried alive! Look here, Magdalen—I can't call you Miss Ormsby, though I suppose I ought to—don't shut me out, let me come and see you sometimes, and perhaps we can think of something together. I know lots of people you know, and—"

"I don't think you would be able to get me a situation," I said, smiling. "A handsome, rich young gentleman is not the very best advocate for a friendless girl. We must give up our intimacy; we ought to have done it before."

I did not convince him, but I extracted a promise from him that he would come no more, and then I bade him good-bye, and cried after he was gone as if my heart would break. It was all so lonely without the sight of that bright young face, and the sound of that hearty voice. And nothing would come for me to do.

I answered advertisement after advertisement, and no one would have me. Who had I been with, and why had I left, were the questions in all the really good places; and for the others, so much was wanted for so little that I feared breaking down under the duties that I heard of. Mrs. Craddock had been hard and exacting enough. She was as nothing compared to some of the people I interviewed during that weary search after the work that would not come.

Mrs. Manders was like a mother to me in all the dreariness I went through. She bade me never trouble about the money for my rent that was running on while my means were wasting. I could pay her when I got some-

thing to do. She cheered me with fresh hopes whenever I went in weary and dispirited from an unsuccessful search after employment.

"It's a long lane, my dear," she said, one day. "But the turn will come, be sure of it. And maybe this is it!"

Something stopped at the door as she spoke, and she went to the head of the stairs to listen. The other lodgers were out, and we were alone in the house except for Mary, and my room door was open. I could hardly believe my ears when I heard someone asking for me, and peeping out of the front-room window I saw a quiet-looking brougham with a footman in livery at the door.

The minds of the children in Mastodon-street were evidently much exercised at the apparition, and they had mustered in good numbers to gaze at the well-groomed horses, and the neat appointments altogether.

I was back in my own room before the occupant of the carriage reached the top of the stairs, and to my amazement proved to be Harry Meredyth's mother, Lady St. Colomb.

"I have come to see you, my dear," she said, kindly. "May I come into your room?"

Her pleasant face seemed like a gleam of sunshine in the dreariness of my life, and I had hardly voice to welcome her.

"Harry sent me," she said, when she had seated herself. "That is, he told me that you were out of a situation again, and something of the cause. But I am afraid he is not a very good hand at telling a story. I understood him that he had got you into some scrape. I hope it is not so, Miss Ormsby."

"Oh, dear no!" I said. "It was my own fault. I was thoughtless, and did not think enough of what other people might think. Mrs. Craddock—"

"Is hasty, I think," Lady St. Colomb said, quietly. "Tell me all about it, my dear. I am more inclined to believe my own boy than anyone else's report."

"I am sure he told you all the truth," I said. "I am afraid I have been very thoughtless. But Lord Henry has been very kind to me, and I allowed myself to enjoy his company and forgot what people might say. He will tell you that I have asked him to see me no more, and—"

I broke down and began to cry; it was a sore subject, and I was out of spirits. Lady St. Colomb put her hand on my shoulder.

"I can trust my boy," she said, proudly; "and I am sure there has been no harm. Harry says there has never been a thought of anything beyond friendship between you."

"Never for a moment!" I said. "But I see now the motive it gave for all that was said, and all that Mrs. Craddock believed. I am glad your ladyship does not think—"

"I think nothing but what is good of you, my dear. And I have come to make a proposal to you," she replied, looking at me with sweet, serious eyes that seemed to read my very heart. "Will you come and live with me at Priory Park?"

"With you, Lady St. Colomb!"

I was too much amazed to say any more. I was surely dreaming now. But she spoke again and confirmed her words.

"We want a governess and friend for my daughter," she said. "She is past the school-room age, as you know. But we wish her to have some young person in the house with her who is well educated enough to be her companion, and sufficiently advanced to keep up her studies. Lord St. Colomb and myself have been thinking of you for some time, and made up our minds to ask you before Harry came home with his story. Will you think it over and let me know?"

"I don't know what to say," I said, hesitatingly. "I am not fit for such a post."

"That is for us to judge, my dear. At any rate, come and make a trial of us, unless you have something else in view."

"I have nothing. I was despairing of ever getting anything when you came in."

"Then come to Priory Park. Try what you can do. I know your musical abilities, and I

feel sure of your other qualities. We will talk of salary afterwards. You have no friends, Harry says; you shall find them in us, if you can make yourself comfortable in our house."

The turn had come, a bright pleasant one, and I could hardly find voice to thank her, and to promise that in a week I would be at Priory Park. Should I have gone, I wonder, if I could have foreseen all that would come out of that little word of consent, and what a revolution it would make in my whole life to be the governess of the Lady Hilda St. Colomb?

(To be continued.)

HABIT is likened to a cable. We weave threads of it every day, and at last we cannot break it.

HOW RED INDIANS MAKE JEWELLERY.—The California sea-shell is a regular article of trade among the wild tribes of red Indians on the plains, as well as among the civilized ones. The shells are about one-fifth of an inch in thickness, five or six inches long, and four inches broad. They are shaped like a saucer, and the outside is prismatic, the colours often merging into blue, green, pink and gold. Near the edge the shell is very thin and delicate, but hard to break. The Indians saw it into pieces, some round, others square, oblong, or pendant, and these they string together by means of wire passed through little holes bored in the pieces. Brass beads are often strung on wires, as a sort of washer, between different parts of the earring, while those suspended on sinew form the pendants. A large brass ring for the ear generally begins a Sioux earring, and to this are hung five or six pendants, made of beads, supported on wire. To these pendants are attached a crosspiece of green hide or wool, then another column of pendants. To these are hung large and small beads, then another cross-piece, and next three large wampum-beads, beneath which is suspended the piece of shell that gives the earring its value. A shell will make one pair of rings, and it generally costs two robes, or six dollars. They are something over a foot long, and from three to four inches in breadth at their widest portion. What the ears of the Indians are made of to withstand such a strain is a mystery; but pride and vanity tell the story of savage as well as the more civilized dwellers in cities and towns.

A MILK-WHITE RAVEN.—A milk-white raven with pale-pink eyes and red legs is exhibited at the Berlin Aquarium, to the augmentation of that admirable institution's daily receipts, says the *Forest and Stream*. It received admission to the great central aviary, in which scores of beautiful birds flutter and chirp and build their nests in comparative freedom, but his presence there spread such a general panic among the other inmates that it was found necessary to remove him to a separate cage. Strange as it may seem; the other birds instinctively recognized that this corvine albino was abnormal, and therefore terrible. Many of them became total abstainers from food and drink through sheer fright while he shared their quarters, and huddled together, shivering, at as great a distance from the fearful anomaly as the limits of their prison would permit them to attain. In all respects, save its extraordinary hues, this raven is as other ravens. His appetite is apparently insatiable, and he ministers to it with a formidable beak. Neither in tone or delivery is there any unusual mellowness or tenderness about his croak. His pink eyes could not be more steadfastly engaged in contemplating the main chance were it as yellow as burnished gold. He was found with a coal-black brood of brothers and sisters, in a nest built by his parents, whose surprise at his peculiar appearance must, we should think, have been considerable, on the topmost branch of an old tree in the Georgenthal, a valley of Thuringia, Germany. The snow-white raven is at present one of the "lions" of the German capital.

THE LOST PATH FOUND.

THE mist rested densely on valley and plain,
And over the mountain was cast.
When down through the shadowy, beech-bordered lane
A youth and a fair maiden passed.

Said he: "Trust me, darling, I know how to read
Every landmark along the old track."

And the maiden replied: "I will trust you,
indeed,
But perhaps I may help coming back."

The youth laughed, but while wooing, he read
not aright

The signs of the woodland and dell;
The maid, though her eyes at his pleading
grew bright,

Kept them fixed on the hedgerows as well.
When twilight had faded, the lover looked
round,

After rambling through coppice and wood—
He thought that he knew every foot of the
ground,
Excepting the place where they stood.

Then the maid whispered shily: "I trusted
you, dear,

And I know, had you been all alone,
You had never been lost as you are, but I fear
Your thoughts from the green lane had flown.
But what is a helpless trust worth through a
life

In which each should have something to do?
Through the time that is coming, when I am
your wife,

I will trust you, and help you, love, too."

She had watched well the path, and she led
him straight out,

By the track they had traversed before.

"Oh, my darling," he said, "though your
trust, without doubt,

Is a treasure, your help is still more.

As over life's highway I journey along,
Through shadow and sunshine with you,
You may trust in my heart, and my hand
will be strong,

When I know that your help is there too."

E. L.

YOUNG AND SO FAIR.

CHAPTER XIX.

"NAUGHTY AND NICE."

THE ballroom at the Court was a sight never to be forgotten by those who had the good luck to see it. Invitations had been canvassed for as eagerly as if the happiness of every woman within a radius of thirty miles depended on her presence at Lady Windsor's dance; and yet everyone who called herself "a lady," and was so-called by an obliging half-dozen of her friends, thought she had a right to be invited, and was consequently bitterly offended when the postman forgot to leave a coroneted envelope at her door.

The tradesmen who enjoyed the Countess's patronage had asked leave for their wives and families to stand in the gardens and catch what glimpse they could of the brilliant crowd inside. Permission had been graciously accorded, and every carriage that deposited a gorgeous freight at the door had to pass through an avenue of curious eyes.

There were many people staying in the house, some of whom were the acknowledged belles of society, but there was a sweetness and freshness about Sibel Fitzgerald which attracted the interest and admiration of every man in the place.

Lord Windsor, after a prolonged stare through a miniature pane of glass which he stuck in his eye, pronounced himself to a special chum "as clean bowled over."

The first dance had been claimed by half-a-dozen, but with a rigidity of principle which almost surprised herself, she declared it to be

already promised. The rest of her card would have been filled up, but she thought of Hugh, and insisted on leaving a few blanks. Major Lushington would be sure to get his own share, if not everybody else's, as well.

The drawing-room, with its hangings of dark blue velvet, was nearly filled, when Lady Windsor, turning to her son, proposed an adjournment to the ballroom. He gave his arm to the Duchess of Berkshire, and led the way.

The folding doors were thrown open, and every eye was dazzled by the blaze of light which came from thousands of wax candles in crystal chandeliers and candelabras. Flowers there were in such profusion that it seemed as if every hothouse and conservatory in England must have been rifled of its fairest contents, and valuable laces draped the windows, such as might well have adorned a Court dress.

Sibel had never seen such a spectacle before, and she looked at it with enchanted eyes as she stood by the Countess's side, forgotten for the moment by the many admirers whom she had taken such care to discard. They had gone off to other partners, who thought of nothing less than of rejecting them, and it seemed as if she were to begin the ball by missing the first dance. Never again would she be so unnecessarily conscientious; scruples were out of place in a fascinating ball-dress from Voisin.

"Oh, Windsor! I was wondering where you had hidden yourself!" exclaimed his mother, as her son came in sight. "Lady Adela is standing in the second window."

"I hope she finds it comfortable," with the utmost composure, though the edge of his extremely high collar endangered his head at every syllable.

"Miss Fitzgerald, this is ours!" with a low bow.

"I don't think so," with a smile.

"I am sure of it. No time to be lost, they are all waiting."

In another moment they were gliding round the empty space, whilst others followed in their wake, and promptly filled it up.

After a few turns the Earl pulled up, and Sibel realised for the first time with some consternation that she had opened the ball with the master of the house.

There were many who thought they ought to have been chosen instead, and fair cheeks flushed, and white necks bridled, as this girl whom nobody had ever seen before took precedence of them all.

Major Lushington, who had arrived five minutes too late, marched straight across the room to where the peccant couple were standing.

"This was my dance," he said, gravely.

"How do, Lushington? Couldn't wait for you the whole evening. Go and console Lady Adela," said Lord Windsor, coolly.

"Thanks, she doesn't need it."

"I waited for you," said Sibel, reproachfully, as she was whirled away.

"The deuce you did!" thought Major Lushington, as he remembered her last words at the door of The Chestnuts: "but 'the King' has put his foot in it this time, at any rate."

"I suppose I may have the second," he said, more as if he were claiming a right than asking a favour, as he met the two a little later on walking slowly up and down the terrace, which had been covered by an immense awning.

Sibel raised her delicate eyebrows.

"As a reward for leaving me in the lurch?"

"No, no, Lushington; you've done for yourself completely. Miss Fitzgerald won't have anything to say to you," said the Earl, with a knowing nod.

"I think she will," with quiet gravity, knowing that it would be the height of folly to betray his exasperation. "Is it to be the second?"

"No, nor the third, fourth, fifth, or sixth. So sorry, but how could I help it?" smiling most innocently, as she looked down at her card.

"May I see it?" holding out his hand: "No, no!" from the Earl, good-humouredly pushing his hand away. "Have a conscience my dear fellow, and don't pry into all our secrets. You shan't pester us any more," and he led his partner away in triumph.

Sibel threw a glance over her shoulder that ought to have softened her lover's heart, but the offensive way in which the Earl had looked her name with his had excited his passion to boiling heat.

He stood with folded arms, half-sheltered by a lace curtain, glowering down on the animated scene before him, whilst Hugh Macdonald danced with one pretty girl after another, but never came near the one whom he considered to be the prettiest of them all.

In spite of Major Lushington's ill-temper, and Macdonald's unexpected defalcation, Sibel was enjoying herself to her heart's content. Her cheeks flushed with the faintest pink, and her heart beat fast with natural exultation, at the general homage paid to her beauty.

The sixth dance was over, and she looked from the blank in her card to the saluting artilleryman in that distant window. It had been asked for persistently, but she had as constantly refused to be pledged. Now if he should choose to claim it, it should be his.

But instead of the Major it was the Earl, whose memory was better for trifles than most other things. He had remembered that she was disengaged for it, and amidst a multiplicity of engagements kept the seventh free.

"Our dance," he said, quietly. Sibel looked up with laughing eyes. "I can't see your name on my card."

"I write such a list, you can't read it."

"It isn't there!"

"Then it ought to be. I am not going to dance it with anyone else."

"Perhaps I am not going to dance it at all."

"All right, then we'll talk it out; but you'll get frightfully knocked about, and it's rather early for that sort of thing."

"Oughtn't you to dance it with—Lady Adela?" she suggested, with a wholesome dread of Lady Windsor's displeasure before her eyes.

"Don't know—never do what I ought," and the next moment his arm stole once more round her waist, and not for the last time that evening.

His manners were unpolished, and might have been learnt in the stable; his appearance was certainly rather against him than not; but his step in the *trois temps* exactly suited hers, and he danced as *Mephistopheles* might dance if Eve were still to be won, and by a waltz in place of an apple.

"Not again!" she said, deprecatingly, as he announced the first extra, and offered his arm.

"Why not?" looking at her in feigned amazement, which made her feel quite shy.

"Fraid of Lushington?"

"Not in the least!" Too young to brave the slightest thought of ridicule she stood up, her faint remonstrance nipped in the bud.

He smiled, as he led her away.

"You are right," he said suddenly, after they had taken a few turns.

"Right? I don't understand you."

"It must be naughty," looking down into her face with hearty appreciation of its charm, "because it is so nice."

"Then I had better go back to Lady Windsor!" she said, demurely.

"To my mother? Not for the world! She would look me for the plainest girl in the room."

"Why the plainest?"

"Because her mother happens to be a duchess. So glad yours isn't."

"It could make no difference to you."

"But it would, though. I shouldn't have enjoyed it half so much."

"Why not? You are always puzzling me."

"Don't you see—you wouldn't be forbidden to?"

"Whether forbidden or not it would be the same," drawing up her graceful neck.

"Excuse me; things forbidden have a charm."

The words had a contrary effect from what her partner had intended. She thought of how she had liked Major Lushington, when everyone was warning her not to flirt with him, and now that it was her duty, so to speak, the temptation had lost its charm. He had resumed his post in the window, and close to the place where he was standing there was a blue velvet couch.

"I am so tired," she said, with a glance at the sofa, "I should like to sit down."

"By all means. Why didn't you say so before?" leading her straight across the corner of the room to the seat which she coveted.

But no sooner had the Earl established himself comfortably for a chat than his mother sailed down upon him, with a smiling apology to Sibel, and carried him off to take some grantees into supper.

"Wait one moment, my dear, you shall not be forgotten," said Lady Windsor, kindly, although she was rather alarmed at the lengths to which her son had gone in singling out her pretty young *protege* for such marked attentions.

Directly her back was turned, Sibel leant forward and said in a low voice,—

"Major Lushington."

No answer; either he had not heard, or else he did not choose to consider that they were still on speaking terms.

Conscious that she had behaved very badly, she braced herself for another effort. The colour came in a wave of crimson to her cheeks as she leant forward again, and said in the softest whisper,—

"Harold!"

In an instant he pulled back the curtain and was by her side.

"So you have at last remembered my existence?" looking down at her, pride and tenderness struggling for the mastery in his dark eyes.

"I never forgot you—you have been mistaken from the first."

"Have I?" with unmistakable eagerness.

"Tell me how?"

"I nearly lost a dance through waiting for you, and then you were angry with me, because you came too late."

"It was all the fault of that infernal puppy—I beg your pardon—but he deserved a curse."

"Do you mean poor Hugh?"

"Yes, poor Hugh, who wouldn't come away before because the old man had a headache."

"Lord Westworth ill?" her eyes opening wide with fear.

"Not a bit of it, only a slight bilious attack or something of the kind. Nothing to be frightened at, I assure you."

"He seemed quite well."

"And so he is. I believe the boy only made a fuss to spite me."

"You are sure?" looking at him with anxious eyes that would be told the truth.

"On my honour—it was nothing."

Satisfied at last, the smile returned to her lips.

"Where is my rose?" with a reproachful glance at his empty buttonhole.

"I pulled it to pieces in a rage."

"Then I shall never give you another."

"Yes, you will. Would you have liked me to look on unmoved when you were coolly appropriated by the 'King of the Masher'?"

"Can you condemn to be jealous of a man like that?" with a smile of much amusement.

"I could be jealous of a frog if it stared at you too much," he said, energetically.

She burst out laughing. The laugh was sweet and low, and he joined in it heartily.

"See to what a pitiable state you have reduced me! And now am I at last to have my waltz?" he added, as he had recovered his gravity.

"I must lose my card if you do," dropping it under the edge of the lace curtain.

CHAPTER XX.

TOO MANY LOVERS.

Stress had made her peace with Major Lushington, and excited envy and uncharitableness in the breasts of many of her own fair sex. When the waltz was over he took her into the magnificent supper-room, where three hundred guests were able to sit down at once. He secured a little table in a far-off corner, and kept her there for so long that the Earl, as he passed to and fro, cast many jealous glances in their direction. As he sat opposite to her, gazing at her beauty with ardent eyes, his spirits rose with the consciousness that she belonged to him, and he became as full of fun and amusement as in the old days, when his powers of conversation, as well as his personal attraction, had tempted her inexperience to the beginning of a dangerous flirtation.

He described several episodes in Lord Windsor's life which placed the Earl in a light which was more comical than dignified; and he talked of his mother's anxiety for "the dear boy," till Sibel almost trembled to think how far she had committed herself with the paragon.

"I suppose he's to marry Lady Adela?" playing with her fan.

"He can't have told you. Why do you think so?"

"Because he seemed so anxious not to dance with her."

"Is that the usual sign?" raising his eyebrows.

"It struck me as a symptom."

"Are you judging from your own case?" trying still to preserve a joking tone.

"You dance divinely. Let us go back into the ball-room," rising from her seat.

"Fly not yet, 'tis just the hour"—quoted the Major, in eager remembrance.

"Yes, for the men to come in and the women to retire. See, I am almost the last."

"Then I suppose we must," rising reluctantly. "But remember, no matter who you are engaged to, I am to have the next!"

"I really forget whose it is," looking down at the empty silk cord, which was dangling from her fan.

"But I don't, Miss Fitzgerald," said Captain Everard, an officer from the nearest garrison town. "I have been looking forward to it for the whole evening."

"Then Major Lushington must excuse me," with a laughing glance, as she walked off with her partner.

"On one condition," he said, with a smile, and she gave a nod of assent.

Macdonald was leaning against the wall in one of the flower-bedecked rooms they had to pass through—his dark head resting close under the branches of a rose-coloured azalea. There was something in his attitude that suggested dejection, and his face might have been that of a Moorish captive, pale with resentment at his own subjection. Sibel had felt much offended with him for his avoidance of her during the evening, but at the sight of his sad face in the empty room her heart softened towards him, and as she passed she looked straight into his eyes, and whispered,

"Why?"

A dusky flush rose to his cheeks—a passionate gleam shot from his eyes. He followed her at once into the ball-room, and, as soon as the dance was finished, went up to her and craved for five minutes on the terrace.

With a slight apology she slipped her arm from Captain Everard's and went away with him through the window down the steps, and into a quiet corner, where the lights were dim, and a bank of exquisite exotics formed a screen from intrusive eyes. Her dress shimmering with pearls almost filled the narrow space, and he stood before her, a strange eagerness in his eyes, an odd dumbness on his tongue.

A vague alarm seized her! "You frighten me. Is Lord Westworth ill?"

"No, as well as I am myself."

"But Major Lushington said something about your refusing to start—"

"Simply because I wouldn't let him get away to have the first dance with you. He cursed and swore, but as the carriage wasn't his, he didn't dare to go without me."

"Too bad of you!" biting her lips. "He was engaged to me."

"I knew it!"

"And yet you dared?"

"I'd dare anything," he said, recklessly. "Only tell me what you wish to be done, and fear will not keep me from doing it."

"What a pity you weren't born half-a-dozen centuries ago!" looking up with admiring eyes at his earnest face, so quick to express every ripple of feeling.

"Yes, and you too. I would have gathered all my tenants together, and carried you off to my home, and not all the Lushingtons in the world should have taken you from me."

"And you wouldn't have cared if I had broken my heart?" looking away from him, and fixing her eyes on the flowers.

"You don't care for him? Of course it alters everything if you do."

She rose slowly from the seat—"Let me pass!"

"Not yet—not till you have told me," in great, but suppressed excitement.

"I will tell you nothing," drawing up her long neck with quiet dignity.

"Not if I entreat you!" laying his hand upon her arm, and even in his excitement, remembering how soft and deliciously moulded it was. "Sibel, I want to know so desperately."

His voice always went to her heart, but she tried to resist it. "It doesn't matter to you one bit."

"Doesn't it? Then why have I kept out of your way all day?"

"Because you were a rude and unsoberable boy. Why didn't you wear my flowers?"

He looked at his empty button-hole.

"Because they were his. I twigg'd it at once when he talked of the roses and lilies he had given you."

"They were mine!"

"Yes, as those are!" looking suddenly at the bouquet in her hand. "I will have nothing that comes from him!"

"Very well, and you shall have nothing from me either. Please take me back."

"You haven't answered my question."

"And I never shall!"

"Are you angry with me?"

"Very!" trying to look so.

"But as I am only a boy, I think you might," looking wistfully into the pretty face, which was beginning to send him mad.

"Boys have no business to ask."

"Boys have hearts as well as anyone else!" he said, indignantly.

"Hearts which change like the wind."

"That's false, and you know it! I never change, I swear it!"

"Oh, never!" with a laughing glance. "This morning you were tolerably nice—so nice you seemed almost a brother; this evening I should probably have got more attention if you had been the stranger that you seemed."

"Only because you had said what I couldn't forget," his colour rising. "Let it be past now, and give me one of those dear little things to show we are friends!" pointing to the wreath of artificial snowdrops on her dress.

She shook her head.

"Never again."

"Sibel, you must!" passionate entreaty in his voice.

"Hush, some one is coming!"

"Never mind!" Stooping his head he dropped a kiss on the nearest flower within reach, which happened to be on her shoulder.

She drew back, blushing indignantly, and the next moment Major Lushington appeared round the corner; and, taking his arm, she went away, without another look at the discomfited boy.

Hugh Macdonald ground his teeth in senseless rage. Already the passions of manhood

were making an inferno of his breast. The prize was not for him, and he knew it; but that could not prevent him from hating the man who seemed likely to possess it. If he had thought him worthy it might have been different; and, perhaps, to a noble rival he might have yielded with a tolerable grace. Never had she looked so lovely before—never had she so entirely taken him out of himself, and deprived him of all power of self-control. He strolled into the ball-room and leant against the wall, as many other men were doing, who were, like himself, partnerless, either from inclination or necessity.

Charming young man, that Hugh Macdonald! said Lady Windsor, meditatively, as she sat by the side of her friend, the Duchess of Berkshire. "See how different he looks from the common herd!"

"Different, yes," said the Duchess, who was in a bad temper. "More like a foreign adventurer than an honest Englishman."

"Adventurers must be pleasanter people than I imagined," the Countess said, in her quietest tone, "if they are at all like him. His Spanish eyes come from his mother—his charm from his father."

"Can't see his charm from this distance, but he looks as if he ought to be labelled dangerous, like those beasts who bite," she explained, graphically.

"If I had a daughter still unmarried I might think so," and Lady Windsor sighed, as it seemed to her friend unnecessarily.

The reason of the sigh she explained the next morning.

"Don't think me fanciful, my dear; but it makes me unhappy to look at that boy's sweet face. Something in it tells me his life won't be happy. It has the doomed look of the Stuarts."

But whilst the Countess's reflections were taking her back to the love-story of her own past, the enjoyment of the evening had reached its climax. The last dance is the best—the most enjoyable of all. It is generally played to some tune not down in the programme, which revives the tenderest associations of some other night; and the severest manners lose some of their stiffness, bright eyes grow softer, and smiles more tender. The joy is so prized because it is known to be fleeting, and the friend of the first dance grows into a lover at the last.

By the end of the evening, the King of the Masher was head-over-ears in love with Sibel Fitzgerald. Major Lushington most unwillingly was forced to share that coveted last waltz with him, and the young Earl seemed anxious to proclaim his infatuation to the world. The Duchess of Berkshire looked on with a frown; even Lady Windsor's usually placid brow was clouded; and Sibel, though elated by a girl's natural triumph, felt uneasy at the power of her charms. She was not thought worthy to remain under her uncle's roof, or to associate with her cousins—yet she was an honoured guest in this splendid house, and the best bred people vied with each other for a smile, or a word, or a passing glance!

The triumph was complete, but not the pleasure, and as the Earl of Windsor bent over her hand, in an evident longing to kiss it, when they were parting at the foot of the stairs, she was thinking of Dudley Wentworth, and all her other lovers seemed *de trop*.

The thing we cannot have is so infinitely precious in comparison with the thing we have!

Major Lushington and Hugh had departed; some of the guests who were staying in the house were already mounting the broad staircase; others had adjourned to the supper-room; the lights were being gradually put out, still Lord Windsor seemed very loth to let her go.

"Good-night and good-bye," said Sibel, holding out her hand, as she stood on the first step.

He grasped it as if he wanted to see if the digital bones could be broken.

"Good-night, but not the other thing,"

"I shall probably be gone before you are up."

"Can't be that. I'm not going to bed."

"Not going to bed!" she echoed in surprise.

"Some of these fellows are coming to have a bathe in the river, and we have to start pretty early for the meet. It's a long way off, but don't you think you could manage it?"

"Thanks, I did not bring my habit with me."

"Send a groom like a shot to fetch it!" with intense eagerness.

She shook her head. "You are very good, but I must be back."

"I wish to heavens you'd stay," picking up a snowdrop which had fallen from her dress.

"I couldn't, Lord Wentworth wants me."

"Hang him! so do I!"

"Good-night!" tripping up the stairs.

"Miss Fitzgerald!" running after her,

"here's something you've dropped," holding out the dilapidated flower.

"Thank you," taking it from him with great gravity.

"I never asked a girl to stay before."

"And so you ask me to stay behind?—much flattered." This time she was really gone, without dropping so much as a hairpin, and the Earl feeling cross went to rejoin his friends in the supper-room.

CHAPTER XXI.

NEWS FROM INDIA.

SIBEL FITZGERALD, after quite an affectionate parting from her hostess, whose anxieties were relieved by the girl's evident willingness to go, arrived at the Chestnuts to find nobody downstairs to greet her. She had imagined that Lord Wentworth would be delighted to have her back, and pictured how his face would brighten when he first caught sight of her coming through the door. And now the absence of a welcome struck her heart with a chill as she went into the empty library. Peters poked the fire, for the weather was still cold, and after making a blaze, informed her that Major Lushington had gone out hunting, and Mr. Macdonald was up with his lordship.

"Lord Wentworth isn't ill?" she said, anxiously.

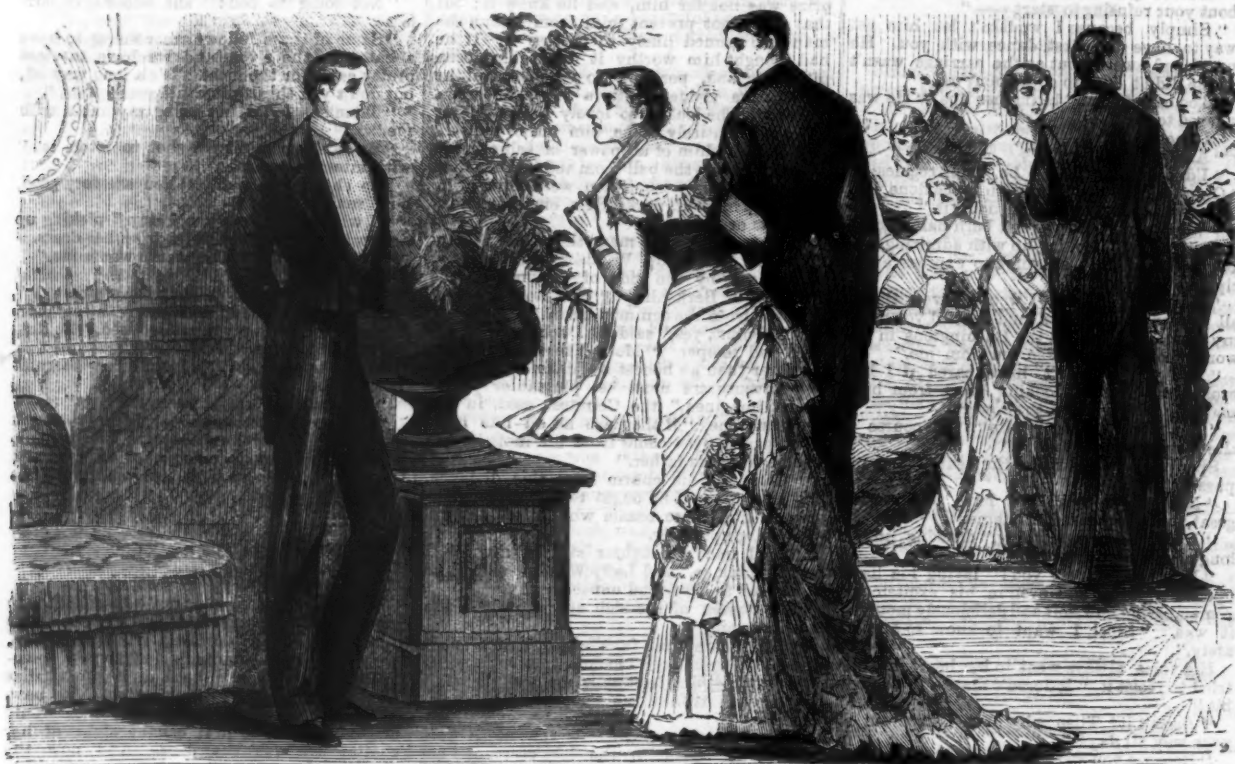
"No, miss, not that I know of. Master Hugh came down and fetched all the papers, and has been upstairs ever since. He was going out with the Major, but something made him change his mind, so he sent his horse back to the stables."

"You are sure that there's nothing wrong?"

"No, miss, I've not heard of anything."

Manser went out of the room with his noiseless step, and she was left alone on the hearthrug, remembering vividly how the Earl had pressed her to stay at the Court, and she had told him so confidently that she was wanted at home. The house seemed quiet, terribly quiet, after the bustle and excitement at the Court, and she was even denied the solace of the *Morning Post*, which she was accustomed to regard as her especial property. Feeling rather disconsolate she went upstairs to take off her jacket and hat. She had never been to Lord Wentworth's private suite of rooms except on the first tour of inspection, when she went round the house under Dudley's guidance, and she felt too shy to intrude. She sat down in her pretty little sitting-room, and taking up a piece of work which she had begun for the poor let her thoughts wander at their will over the past.

She felt a different girl now to the quiet little thing who used to ride about the lanes near Coombe Lodge, and blush to the curls on her forehead if she chanced to see a friend on a certain dark chestnut riding towards her from under the shadow of the trees. He was always so good to her from the very first, when she came a miserable little wail to her uncle's house, and he never went away from her without leaving some pleasant thought behind. She used to think him the noblest man that had ever lived, and resolved to shape her own insignificant little life in such an



[AS STEEL PASSED SHE LOOKED STRAIGHT INTO HIS EYES, AND WHISPERED, "why?"]

honest straightforward corra s s to be worthy of his friendship; and now she had no pattern to copy, the resolves were broken, and the hopes gone.

What would he have thought of her if he had seen her last night, flirting with every man she came across, hurting the feelings of her friends, and enjoying her triumph over strangers who were better born than herself? The vicissitudes of life were making her reckless, and if she once trod the downward course of coquetry what would the end be, and where would she stop?

She felt that she needed some friend to stretch out a warm hand to save her; but where was he to be found? Not in Hugh Macdonald, who was nothing but a sentimental boy—sentiment dashed with impudence. Nor in Major Lushington, who had no high standard for the fairer sex, but was content that all should flirt, on the one condition that the warmest smiles and the tenderest glances were kept as a monopoly for himself.

If she had never seen Dudley Wentworth perhaps she might have loved him well, but respect would have had no place amongst her affections, and he could never have filled her heart. There would have been many empty corners, and now they could never be filled.

There was a tap at the door, and she looked up eagerly as Hugh came in. He shook hands, asked when she had arrived, and mentioned that he had been downstairs to look for her.

"Why did you hide yourself up here?"

"I didn't hide myself; only finding nobody in the library of course I didn't care to stay. Why is Lord Wentworth so much later than usual?"

"He has been rather upset," and the boy's face became grave.

"Has he heard any bad news?" her thoughts instantly flying to the one that was furthest.

"There was a telegram from India in the paper this morning," looking down at the fire,

because he saw that every scrap of colour had deserted her face.

"Well?" in a hoarse whisper.

"And the—th Hussars are ordered to the front."

"But, Dudley, Mr. Wentworth won't be there in time!" her eyes raised in eager hope.

"Do you think that anything would prevent him?" the boy's face kindling.

"But I didn't think there was a war."

"It has just broken out—and some of our fellows have been murdered; they tried diplomacy—but that failed, as, of course, it would. Fancy negotiating with a set of thieves and cut-throats, and expecting them to be bound by their honour, as if they knew what honour was! So now we are sending up our men in handfuls to stop the row."

"In handfuls! but surely that's not wise!"

"Not wise at all, but we always do it, and I suppose we always shall. I only wish to heavens I was there. Wentworth's a lucky fellow!" with a sigh of intense longing.

"Lucky! I—I don't see it!" her lips trembling.

"Isn't it better to be in the thick of it than here—starving for news like that poor old man—able to do something, and not to crawl through life like a worm! I should have been a soldier long ago, only my father wouldn't let me. I think he said I should never pass the medical exam.—but I believe I should. My heart doesn't bother me now half as much as it used; and it *does* seem such an awful shame to be cut out of everything."

"Not everything, Hugh."

"Yes, everything," he rejoined doggedly. "It's the only profession I ever cared for, and even you would have thought something of me if I had been a soldier."

"And Lord Wentworth—you don't think of him?" with tender reproach.

"Yes I do, but his own son leaves him, so I am not bound to stay."

"He asked his father if he should give up the army, and it was by Lord Wentworth's

express wish that he stayed in it. But where are the papers? Can't I see one of them?"

"He wanted to see if the accounts varied, but I'll go and fetch them."

"How does he bear it?" anxiously, when he had returned, and she had scanned the meagre account with eager eyes.

"As bravely as ever. He's the biggest trump I ever knew."

"It was good of you to give up hunting."

"As if I should have thought of leaving him!"

"But you knew I was coming home, and you won't have another chance?"

"I know it—but he would have been all alone—and I couldn't count on you."

"The brougham was to fetch me at twelve."

"Yes, but 'the Masher' might have persuaded you to stay."

"Not likely. Hugh, tell me," looking up at him with wistful eyes, "it won't be a very dangerous war, will it?"

"The Afghans can fight—it's the one thing they can do thoroughly, and the country's as bad as possible for civilized warfare. All the advantages are on their side, and the difficulties on ours. But, of course, we shall pull through," he added, confidently.

"Yes—but at what cost?" with pale lips that quivered as she thought of Dudley's danger.

"Ah!" said Hugh, thoughtfully, "the bravest always pay."

(To be continued.)

THERE are many women of the humbler classes who, having clothed themselves in tawdry finery, and spent their money in ribbons and false lace, which would have amply sufficed for comfortable flannel—when they get wet and cold, resort, says a medical contemporary, to the dram-shop to supply by artificial means the warmth their wretched clothing is unable to afford. Thus disease, pauperism, and death are often the result.



[PALMER THROWS HIMSELF AT HER FEET, AND HER EYES LOOK AT HIM WISFULLY.]

NOVELETTE.]

HYACINTH FORBES.

It is a warm June day, and the bright morning sun is streaming down upon Hyacinth Forbes's yellow head, which is reposing very comfortably in a hammock under the apple trees. The girl looks the very picture of lazy, good-humoured content as she swings herself slowly from side to side. Is Hyacinth pretty? Well, that is a question that many people disagreed upon. I only know that hers is one of the faces that once seen is never forgotten, and many of her friends took great pleasure in watching its endless changes of expression. She is slowly turning her rings round and round on her pretty fingers; then she raises herself a little to see if anyone is coming across the lawn. Yes, there he is, a big, broad-shouldered man coming towards her and switching the tops of the flowers with his stick. He has a stern face, with a square firm mouth, but his eyes are very soft and gentle, and change the character of his countenance. He goes over to the hammock, and Hyacinth opens her eyes with a little hypocritical start, and says coolly, "Oh, so you are back again! I thought I was going to have such a nice quiet morning!"

"Candid again, Miss Forbes," retorts the other; "but why did you trouble to tell a story when I asked you to come out?"

"Well, appearances are against me, I own. The fact is, I felt lazy, so I left my work to do itself and came out here instead. I am enjoying myself thoroughly, doing nothing at all."

"Will you come on the river now? I'll row you up to the woods; it is so cool there under the trees."

"No, thanks."

She spoke in the most innocent voice, as if she had declined to take a chair; but possibly continued rebuffs were beginning to tell upon Mr. Palmer's temper, which was by no means

perfect, for with a stiff little bow he turned on his heel and went back across the lawn.

"I have offended him at last," thinks Hyacinth. "What shall I do? Perhaps he won't come near me again all day; and I was very rude," and then she swings herself down from the hammock and she likewise crosses the lawn. Mr. Palmer is unfastening the boat and pretends not to hear the footsteps, so the girl goes up to him with the frankness which is one of her charms.

"I think I would like to go with you, Mr. Palmer," and Otho's brow clears, and he smiles upon her.

These two had not known each other a month ago, but people soon get well acquainted in the pleasant out-door life of a river-side town. Otho Palmer is a barrister, by no means too much given to work; but some weeks before he had not been well, and had been ordered rest and quiet, and so it happened that he put up at an old-fashioned inn on the banks of the Thames at Boynford. Captain Forbes was an old friend of Mr. Palmer's father, and an intimacy that had died out in course of years was revived by the young man, who found it very pleasant to be warmly received as the son of the companion of the old captain's early days. Hyacinth is an only child, and has grown up in the atmosphere which generally falls to an only child's lot. Her mother died when she was only six years old; but Captain Forbes had afterwards married a gentle, affectionate woman, who certainly could not have loved the child more if she had been her own; and as time went on Hyacinth, who had plenty of energy and firmness of character, ruled the house. Sometimes the Captain mildly objected to some of her plans, but Mrs. Forbes was invariably on her side, and in the end Hyacinth always had her own way.

The acquaintance with Mr. Palmer began with many differences of opinion. The two got on well from the first; they were each of them at their best when they were together, and the warfare between them was all on the

surface, in spite of many a sarcasm on Hyacinth's part. But to-day she is in a very gentle mood as she sits in the stern watching Otho's oars; he is rowing steadily and thinking all the while. He has something to say which he has felt for days he ought to say at once, and yet he has gone on putting the idea from him. After all, why should he speak of himself and his own affairs? Why should he suppose that they would be of the slightest interest to Miss Forbes? And so on, and so on, finding the reasons we can all find when we don't want to do something which lies straight before us, and which in our hearts we know we ought to do at once. Meanwhile, his companion, with the bright light upon her face, is thinking too. She is by no means a sentimental girl; her life has been very healthy and practical, full of interest and gaiety, till in the past few weeks the change has come, and unconsciously and imperceptibly the love that I suppose comes once to us all has come to her too, though as yet she does not know it. They have nearly reached the woods; they go down the backwater, where the cool flat leaves and the water-lilies are lying floating on the river, and Otho stops and holds out his hand to Hyacinth. She leaves the boat, and they sit down under one of the overhanging trees. A few minutes, and then Mr. Palmer jumps up, and saying he will soon be back he climbs the little hill behind them and paces slowly up and down under the trees. It is an old trick of his when he is thinking. She catches sight of his face, which looks very troubled, and a chill, frightened feeling steals over her. Is he angry with her? Can he be offended by her waywardness, or is he in some trouble? She has a tell-tale face, for when Palmer returns and throws himself down on the grass at her feet, she says nothing, but her eyes look at him wistfully. Oh, the bitterness of that moment! But his mind is made up; he will tell his tale, all will be right then, and he will be the only one to suffer. Manlike he dashes into the subject at once.

"I don't think I have ever told you much about myself, have I, Miss Forbes?"

"No, not very much."

"I don't know that there is much to tell, except that—" he stopped and looked down at the river.

"Whatever is coming?" thought poor Hyacinth. He turned suddenly towards her, and his face was very white.

"I am going away at once—in-morrow—because I am engaged to be married; and I have been here too long. I thought I loved Maud Drayton!" he went on. "Good-bye! how I have spoiled my life."

He had taken both her hands in his, and unconsciously was holding them so tightly that her rings were crushed into her soft fingers.

"I did not mean to tell you this. For days I have known that I ought to go!"

He raised her hand to his lips and kissed them hurriedly and passionately, and then raised his eyes to the face which he knew would look kindly and pityingly upon him. The idea that he had gained her love never struck him, for he was entirely free from that species of vanity which affects so many men. He raised his face, he saw, and looked at the girl, and to his dying day he remembered what he saw; for the love he would have given the world to gain was shining from the sweet eyes, and her face was covered with a smile "sadder than any tears." Neither spoke, they had no need of words, for they saw what was in each other's souls. He put his arm round her and kissed her, and then Hyacinth drew herself gently away.

"Oh, Hyacinth! my darling, do you really love me? Nothing shall ever separate us now. Hush, hush," he went on hurriedly as she tried to speak, "if it had only been I who had to suffer, it would have been different; but if you care for me as I do for you, you shall not suffer also. Good heavens! child, are both our lives to be spoiled? How can I marry Maud now, when I love you? My little bird!" and he raised the pale sweet face and looked at it very sadly.

"Ah! my poor Hyacinth, in your whole life you may never have a temptation like this one! Will she stand firm, and prefer honour and duty to her own and her lover's happiness, or will she shut her eyes and drift down the stream as many a one has done before her? She shivers, as if she were suddenly cold this warm June day, and her cheeks flush a little and her eyes droop,—but the battle has been fought and won."

"You forget, Otho, we must not put our happiness before duty. You are bound to—to someone else! You gained her love, and thought you loved her, and all this must not alter that promise. And I won't grieve too much—I won't, indeed!"

"You don't love me as I love you!" he said, angrily.

"I do love you!" smiling very sadly. "This is our farewell, so I will be quite honest and tell the whole truth. Do you remember the old lines, Otho,—

"I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honour more."

Well, that is what I mean. How could we do such a wrong thing? We should not be happy if we did."

"You are right, Hyacinth; but it's so hard. But, at least, we can be friends!"

"No, no! not yet, perhaps years hence; but now we must not meet."

"Not meet! That is too much!"

"No, Otho, it is only right! Afterwards, when our love—when we grow older we will be friends, and I will love your wife; but not yet—I could not bear it. And now I must go. We will say good-bye here, and I will row myself back."

For a moment Palmer felt hurt, she spoke so calmly. He bent down and looked at her closely, and her composure gave way, for, sobbing bitterly, her head sank upon his arm. In a little while she grew calmer and tried to smile; he took her face between his hands.

"The sweetest, truest, kindest face in the world!" he said, gently.

It was time they should part. One last kiss, one last clasp of the hand, and then she ran down the bank and got into the boat without looking round. At the first stroke of the oars he sprang forward, crying wildly, "Hyacinth! Hyacinth!"

She did not stop, but rowed steadily on, till in a few moments he saw her no more.

CHAPTER II.

The summer is gliding by, and Hyacinth is struggling to lead her usual life, and bravely endeavouring to hide her sorrow. Captain Forbes wondered at Mr. Palmer's sudden departure; but when he was told that business had called him away he only said, "Ah! of course! yes, my dear, quite right for him to go at once. I like to see a young fellow prompt!" and with that he left his evening pipe, and took himself to a highly interesting work on agricultural improvements. Luckily for his family the Captain's farming was only theoretical. He cherished a dream of buying a farm somewhere in the midland counties when he had sufficiently stored his mind with information; but somehow his wife and daughter did not encourage the idea. Mrs. Forbes was a gentle, indolent woman, with a tender nature, and a capacity for novel-reading that was something astounding, and as a practised decipherer of the mysteries of the human heart had found out poor Hyacinth's secret before the girl had realised it herself.

For two or three days after that parting in the woods Hyacinth had held up bravely. She could never see Otho again, her life would be sad and lonely; but did he not love her? Should she not always have those happy days to look back upon? Who was so noble, so manly, or so good as he? Was it wrong to be so glad that he loved her? But in time he would forget her and be happy with Maud, and then the grey eyes would fill with tears, and the pain would grow sharp.

She was sitting dreaming in the garden one day when her step-mother came to her. She sat down by her and caressed her tenderly, and little by little the whole story came out.

"He ought not to have stayed so long," says Mrs. Forbes, very angrily. "He had no right to make you like him when he was engaged all the time. It was very cruel."

"Now, Robin, I'll not listen to another word. Otho has done nothing wrong, neither have I. He never for a moment thought I cared for him, but how could I help it? And now it is all over, I think you might try to understand, and not judge him harshly."

"My dear, I know more of the world than you do, and—"

"Robin, when you put on airs of being worldly-wise, it's really too funny! You are the most sentimental goose in existence, and the simplest of women. And don't pity me, please. Do you think I'm going to be a cloud in the house and worry you and dad with my troubles? I'm not going about in a shabby dress and a general badness of costume like Katie Marchmont, when her engagement was broken off. I mean to be brave, darling, and put a good face upon it, and some day I may forget him. Who knows?"

And so, I say, the weeks went by. Mr. Palmer had written to Mrs. Forbes, thanking her for all the kindness she had shown him, and then there was a blank, and no more was heard of him. Poor Hyacinth used often to feel that if she had but the merest scrap of a letter, if she had only heard of him through other people, it would be something. Anything would be easier to bear than the utter silence. Sometimes she would ask herself, was it necessary that she should bear so much—might she not have given way, and been happy? Was he forgetting her? He was at work, he had things to distract him; perhaps already she was fading from his mind, which of course was what she ought to wish. Our little heroine

is very human; she has made her sacrifice, but she feels as if it would kill her to know that he had forgotten her so soon.

One day she returns from a visit to the schools, and her stepmother comes to meet her.

"Now, my dear; the Andertons are coming home to-morrow, bringing visitors with them. They want to have a gay month for their friends. Mrs. Herbert has just been here and has told me all about it. She has had a glowing letter from Mrs. Anderton. The continental trip was delightful."

"Don't tell me, Robin, I know it all as well as if I had seen the letter. Most charming people, perfect in every way. Belle and Georgie have received so much attention that it was quite embarrassing," says Hyacinth, mimicking the absent mamma's manner very cleverly; "and they are bringing home some delightful friends with them, and in a fortnight we shall hear that they were never so disappointed in people in their lives. I am glad they are coming, Robin, all the same; they will rouse us from our torpid state of mind."

The next day the Andertons arrived. Mrs. Anderton a degree more fussy and important than ever, and her two daughters delighted with themselves, and very full of the conquests they had made. They cultivated a high-art style of dress, and a certain superiority of manner which did not tend to make them popular. Belle was artistic, and painted in water colours rather badly; but she and her family believed in her talents, and she worked so hard at her productions that surely they must have been good. Georgie, the other daughter, was a singer; she had a fine, rather harsh voice, but then, look how she practised! And when Georgie sang, and Mrs. Anderton told you that Patti herself did not execute that shake as her daughter did, it required presence of mind and firmness of character to refuse to be carried away by the family pride.

When Mrs. Forbes and Hyacinth called upon their neighbours they found Miss Georgie Anderton at work, and a pretty dark-haired girl chattering away by her side.

"So glad to see you!" says Georgie, with effusion. "We knew you would like to hear all our doings. This is my friend, Miss Drayton; we met at Dieppe, and we have been together ever since, have we not, Maud?"

"Maud Drayton!" thought Hyacinth; "so this is his Maud!"

She did not dare look near her for a few moments; and, indeed, a sudden beating of her heart caused her to turn aside, for she feared that her face might betray her.

Mrs. Forbes and Georgie were soon deep in continental experience, and Hyacinth asked Miss Drayton some trivial question.

"No," Maud said, "she had never been to Boyndon before, and she thought it a very lovely place. Did Miss Forbes row?"

"Yes," says Hyacinth, "I've been upon the water since I was almost a child. If you like I'll take you out some day, and give you a lesson in rowing."

"Oh, thanks, I should like that very much. Belle and Georgie will never have enough time to spare any for that kind of thing. Are you clever, too, Miss Forbes? I think it is so good of them to have a girl like me for a friend, for I only play and sing a little, and I can do nothing at all well. Belle paints from morning till night, and Georgie's singing hardly ever stops. It's a great thing to be clever, isn't it?" says Maud, who is evidently a humble worshipper of the Anderton genius.

"What do you like doing best?" said Hyacinth, smiling at the pretty babyish face, which looked as if its owner did not trouble herself much about anything but enjoyment.

"Well, I don't know—novel-reading and dancing, I think, if I tell the truth. I'm an only child, you know, and rather spoilt, of course. Mamma and I travel a good deal. I like travelling, don't you?"

"I should if I got the chance, but as yet I have never been out of England! Just now I

feel I should like to go right away for a good long while, and see new places, and new people, and get new things to think about. Don't you get weary of everything sometimes, and want to go away and forget?"

"I think she had forgotten to whom she was speaking, and was thinking aloud, for a very sad expression was in the deep grey eyes which were looking far away over the river to the distant trees.

"I expect everyone feels like that sometimes," answered Maud, who had never yet known a real trouble; "but then something happens, and things get right again."

"We are getting quite sentimental," says Hyacinth, who had been struggling the whole time with a bitter feeling that Otho was farther away from her than ever. Of course he would be happy with this sweet child-like girl with the baby face. "But oh!" she thought, "she could not love him as I would have done. She will love him as well as she can, and it will be so little, after all! What a fool I have been! If I could but see him once more I think I could bear it better."

Then Maud came back to her with her hands full of flowers.

"Mrs. Forbes has asked me to come and see you to-morrow, and I should like to do so very much, and you will take me on the river, won't you?"

"Yes, of course I will. I shall be very pleased to have you," and Maud was quite unconscious of the effort it cost the girl to say it with a smiling face.

For the next fortnight the two were almost inseparable. At every spare moment—and they were a good many in the course of the day, for the Misses Anderson had not much time to devote to the amusement of visitors—Maud would go across the lawn in search of her new friend. To use her own expression, she had fallen in love with Hyacinth. She had never before liked any girl half so well; indeed, Maud's former friendships had not been of a very enthusiastic character. Before very long she told Hyacinth of her engagement.

"Otho is the dearest fellow in the world, but I am rather afraid of him. He is so clever; I can't think how he ever came to fall in love with me, but I could not help liking him, of course," goes on Maud, with a pretty flush in her soft cheeks; "and mamma was glad because he has a good income, and she would never have let me marry a poor man."

"You are not quite the kind of girl to be a poor man's wife, are you, dear?"

"Well, no, I'm afraid not, I like nice things about me, and I should hate worry and shabby dresses, and never to be able to go anywhere. And then Otho might get tired of me if we were very poor. I know someone who got dreadfully tired of his wife because she could not go out much, and so they saw too much of each other. The husband took to going out by himself, and poor Mrs. Edgecombe stayed at home with the children. Now I should not like that sort of thing at all, and I don't think one's husband's love makes up for everything."

"Worldly wise little woman!"

"I think I'm right though, Hyacinth. You will see Otho in a few days; he is coming down on Friday."

"I have seen him before," says Hyacinth, quietly. "Mr. Palmer was staying at Boynton, you know, this summer, and his father is an old friend of papa's, so he often came to see us."

"Ah, yes, of course, how stupid of me! I knew he was staying somewhere on the river, but I had forgotten it was at Boynton. Otho is a bad boy about letters. Sometimes he is two or three weeks without writing, and just then we were travelling about. How funny that you should know him! I expect that he liked you very much," goes on Maud, with her head luckily bent over her needle work, or she must have seen the colour which had suddenly mounted to her friend's face.

"I liked him," said Hyacinth calmly. "I found he was a very good companion; he used

to talk over everything, and generally disagreed on a good many points."

"Did you? Ah, you see you are clever enough to talk to him about books and things which are miles over my head. I often wish I were not such a goose."

"You are a very pretty lovable goose, if you are one at all," retorts Hyacinth, stroking Maud's brown curly hair.

"Oh! yes; I know I'm pretty!" laughing. "I've been told that so often that I take that fact as settled; but I don't think one's face is everything!" she went on, shaking her head. "Sometimes I fancy that Otho may grow tired of me, and that would be a sad thing, wouldn't it?"

"What should you do if—he ceased to care for you?" As Hyacinth asked the question she looked at her closely.

"What should I do? I've never thought of that! I suppose I should cry my eyes out for a little while, and then—and then—do you think I should pine and die? I can't fancy myself doing that even for Otho, and I should look so ugly with a long, sad face, and my eyes red and swollen."

"No, Maud; that wouldn't do for you, would it? Keep your eyes bright, little one, and we won't imagine horrid things that will never happen. Your life will run smoothly. Who could be unkind or untrue to you?" But as she spoke her own future lay like a dull, grey landscape before her, and some quaint, sad words she had once heard sung came back to her mind,—

"Oh! how easily things go wrong,
A sigh too much, or a kiss too long,
And there follows a mist and a weeping rain,
And life is never the same again."

CHAPTER III.

The summer is merging fast into autumn, but the evenings are still warm; and the garden, with its slope down to the river, is tempting Mrs. Anderson's guests into sentimental strolls in the dusky twilight between the dances.

Can anything be pleasanter than a dance in the country under such circumstances? The rooms are cool, and decorated very prettily with flowers. Most of the people know each other more or less well, and the sprinkling of strangers from London have a look of enjoyment about them which they certainly did not wear at the balls which they have condescended to honour with their presence during the past season.

That handsome man, with the big moustache, for instance, who is flirting with the pretty Miss Duxmoor, as a rule is given to looking upon girls as a bore, and dancing as only fit for boys fresh from College.

Then there is Captain O'Donnell, with the fresh-coloured face and eyes that are almost too blue for a man who is doing his duty manfully, and talking to his partner with that air of absorbed devotion that no one can put on better than an Irishman.

A dreamy, beautiful waltz is being played, and the dancers glide by. Maud Drayton is looking her very best. Her soft, cloudy, white dress and white flowers suit her better than anything else could have done, and her eyes are bright and her cheeks flushed with excitement; for decidedly Maud is a belle to-night, and she is thoroughly enjoying herself.

But of all the faces there not one has the charm of Hyacinth's. She is a little pale, and her smile is not quite as ready as it used to be; but the change has made her face more interesting, and given it a new sweetness. She is dancing with Captain O'Donnell, and listening to some story he is telling her with a very amused look of interest.

All this time she and Otho have not exchanged a word. He has spent the greater part of the evening leaning against one of the windows, but he has not been unconscious of Hyacinth's presence for a moment. He had dreaded meeting her again. He hardly knew

himself what he wished or hoped, and now he is here he sees her talking and laughing gaily with one and another, and that O'Donnell, too! What intimate terms they seem to be on! "I suppose she has forgotten me!" he thinks, gnawing the end of his moustache. "Girls soon forget! Some other fellow turns up, and the first man is forgotten!" And while these amiable reflections passed through his mind, he looked up and met Hyacinth's eyes with the old, sweet, wistful expression in them, and somehow all the doubts melted away, and Otho's heart amote him, for he felt as if he had wronged her.

Then he asked her to give him the next waltz.

"If you like," she answered, not daring to look at him.

The dreamy, heavily-marked music of the "Hilsonian" was floating through the room. They never, either of them, forgot that strain, or the mingled joy and keen, sharp pain of those few moments.

The music ceased; and without a word they followed some others into the garden. The moon had risen, and they strolled along till they came to where the river flowed quietly at their feet with the silvery light upon it.

The day they had first known the truth—yes, that had been bitter, and the parting hard to bear—but now three months had gone by. Each had struggled bravely to forget the other, and their love had but grown the stronger.

"Are you happy, Hyacinth?" he said, at last, looking at her in the dim, uncertain light, as if he would read the inmost thoughts of her heart.

"Not very!"

"Good heavens, are we to go on like this for ever?" he said, impatiently. "Hush, dear, I know what you are going to say. Do you think I don't know the words that are ready upon your lips? I must growl sometimes. What a fool I was to come down here and see you again, and yet I am glad, too, but I shall suffer for it afterwards."

Her eyes were raised to his now, and she tried to take away her hands, but he held them fast. Every particle of colour had left her face, but she still smiled bravely.

"Oh, don't talk like that, Otho; it is my fault; I should not have come here with you. Look, it will get easier in time; we shall not always be miserable like this," she went on, choking down something that sounded very like a sob. "Maud loves you so much, and when you are once married you will love her more and more, and you will look back upon all this as a dream."

"And you, my love, my darling, how will it be with you? What do you think I feel, knowing that I have spoilt your life? That you love me, and that I go away and leave you? I'm not vain, Hyacinth; it is not that I think that I am so much better than any other fellow that you could never leave off caring for me, but I know that you are one of the women who will never love twice, at least as you love me. And you see Maud's character. If it were all over with me she would soon like somebody else."

"I understand you," she answered; "but I know you better, I think, than you know yourself. I am sure you would not act dishonourably even to gain our happiness. And how can you judge Maud like that? Ah, Otho, I suppose men and women are different in their minds, for when you are away I feel it is all so hard, and I'm so tempted to give in and to prefer you to duty and honour; but when I see you I'm the stronger of the two, and I know that I would not buy our happiness at the cost of your honour. Come, let us go back to the house!"

"Kiss me once," he whispered, "only once, dearest."

She raised her head as if to obey him, and then checked herself.

"No, Otho, I must not, it is not right; we must not speak like this again. Ah, don't ask me to kiss you, dear," she went on, hurriedly. "I will say good-bye this way," and she pressed

his hand to her cheek and her lips, and kissed it softly twice.

Then they turned, and walked slowly back to the house, neither speaking.

Hyacinth sat down in a quiet corner, and with a smile that took away the sting from the action, she sighed to Mr. Palmer to leave her.

He looked round for Maud; yes, there she was, talking to O'Donnell again, with a beaming face. Some months before Otho would have felt a twinge of jealousy; now he was simply relieved that she was happy, and had not missed him. When would this wretched party come to an end? What fools the men were making of themselves, and how all the girls flirted! Well, he supposed it was time he should dance with Maud. At any rate, she was not in fault, and he would not be cowardly enough to let her see anything of his feelings; but the weariness and the hollowness of it all!

He stood behind Maud's chair; she looked round at him, and whispered laughingly, "At last you have come to ask me for a waltz, I suppose? I have kept this next one for you, though you don't deserve it!"

"You deceitful girl! You have done nothing but dance and flirt—yes, distinctly flirt—the whole night, so I did not like to bring my grave face forward!"

She rose, and placed her hand on his arm, as the music recommenced.

"You're not vexed with me, are you, Otho? You know that I would rather be with you than with anyone else!"

"I know that, my child, and I like you to be happy in your own way. And I'm not a bit cross. Do I look it?"

His smile set her rising doubts at rest.

She mistook kindness for love as he intended she should, and the little cloud passed away from her mind.

The short summer night is wearing on; the rooms are gradually thinning, and the Anderton girls are making arrangements with a few chosen guests for a water party the following day. Hyacinth makes excuse after excuse; she knows that such a day will only make things harder afterwards, but the Andertons will take no denial, and Maud looks so disappointed that she gives way, and promises to join them.

CHAPTER IV.

The sun is shining its very hottest down upon the heads of the group standing on the bank the next morning.

The usual hesitation as to the arrangement of the boats is taking place. Most of the party have pretty fixed ideas as to their wishes with regard to their companions. One or two of the men are supremely indifferent to anything of the kind; and one gifted individual, who considers himself the life and soul of any picnic, is making facetious remarks, and generally conducting himself in a fussy and obtrusive manner.

At last they are all settled in three boats, and Captain O'Donnell and Miss Harvey continue their flirtation of the night before with the utmost freshness and vigour.

Maud places herself quietly in Otho's boat, and seems too lazy to exert herself much.

I wonder where one could find as lovely a bit of scenery as those three miles of river above Boynton? The trees slope down a rich, varied bank of many tints, to the water's edge. You pass by the little island with its pretty fanciful house, and you row gently on under the dark, overhanging foliage, and insensibly a quiet, peaceful frame of mind steals over you.

I think that reach of the river ought to bring out the poetic and artistic talent that is lying dormant, perhaps, in many of our minds if we only knew how to express it. Many scenes, many fine views fall upon us, but never that stretch of river. It is always new and fresh, always restful—that greatest of all charms in these busy, excited days in which we live.

Otho Palmer is very silent. What does he

see with his half-shut eyes as he lies lazily in the bow of the boat?

A great weariness has come over him at the outset of life, when all should be bright and hopeful. He is sick and disheartened, and he has no one but himself to blame.

He has not been a man much given to sentiment—what sensible Englishman is?—but now he is realising the bitter truth that there is something in the madness called love after all, and he is beginning to feel that there will be always a want in his life. And then he thinks, as he puffs away at his cigar, that he is no worse off than thousands of other men. Who gets what he sets his heart upon?

Who, indeed? But we will hope that this man will not become embittered by the loss he is sustaining.

I think that one of the hardest trials one can have to bear is to stand aside and lose the one person on earth whom we think could make us happy—some one who is, as it were part of ourselves, a piece of our own souls; and that strange law of nature which causes us to long the more for a thing we cannot obtain makes the pain sharper.

If our wish were realised there would be flaws in our happiness, and there is always the possibility of disappointment and disillusion lurking in the future; but none of these things obtrude themselves to mar the dream which stands out before us as the unattainable good—the one thing to be desired.

The day wore on as such days generally do, and after much rowing the party landed for dinner.

The lively man made himself very useful in unpacking, and, being cheered on by a little praise, took the bulk of the work upon himself all day.

"Horsley, open the champagne, like a good fellow, will you?" says young Anderton, who is not as energetic as his sisters, and never does anything he can avoid.

"Horsley is a splendid man for a picnic, isn't he, Miss Harvey?" says Captain O'Donnell to the pretty girl in blue, in a voice that Horsley is meant to overhear. "The worst of him is, though, that, from all I hear, he's a desperate flirt, and it is not quite fair when a man's as good-looking as he is! He has a way with girls that I should think is rather taking."

Mr. Horsley, who is on his knees busily uncorking bottles, listens with a self-conscious smile.

To be accused of flirting is, indeed, pleasant. Yes, he flatters himself he can make himself precious agreeable when he likes to take the trouble; he looks round to see whom he shall favour with his attentions, and then, with a fascinating smile, throws himself down at Maud's feet, quite unmoved by the look of annoyance with which she turns to speak to Mr. Palmer, who is lazily talking to her, and eating a very good dinner the while.

"I'll cut out that silent, glum-looking fellow," thinks Horsley, complacently stroking a very black moustache. "It's a shame to see such a pretty girl throwing herself away upon him."

Hyacinth, from the shelter of a neighbouring tree, watches the proceedings with much amusement. She has met the lady-killer before, and knows by sad experience that there is no shaking him off when he is pleased to honour you with his attentions. She has resolved that she will not, by word or look, draw Otho to her side. She is not one of the people who do things by halves; and she talks so kindly, and with so much animation to the curate, who is sitting next her, that he begins to hope that at last she means to reward his patient devotion.

"We must get Horsley, to give us one of his stories," says young Anderton, presently. "He has some splendid ones, I can tell you—rattling good ones, that keep you in roars of laughter."

Anderton winked at O'Donnell, who promptly added a little persuasion, and Horsley tried to look bashful, and failed.

"Do amuse us," Mr. Horsley! puts in

Maud, who has been the victim of tender glances and sentimental remarks for the last half-hour. "Did you ever see such a dreadful man, Otho?" she whispers.

"Well, not often I must say, but you ought not to find fault with him, at any rate!" says Otho, who is watching Hyacinth opposite, and wondering what on earth she and that curate can be talking about.

Mr. Horsley's story was something about his grandfather and a horse, and a gun; but what the exact point of it was it would be difficult to say. O'Donnell and Harry Anderton received it with such wildly exaggerated appreciation that the narrator's brain was quite turned.

"And the gun went off by itself!"

"How extraordinary! Really, I can hardly believe it!"

I can assure you it is a fact," returns the delighted Horsley, who then began again at the beginning, and repeated the story; and I know I am keeping under the mark when I say that, with a little more flattery and a few more questions, this benighted young man ended by telling his weak little tale thirteen times. He afterwards told some friends of his that he never met such a charming set of people in his life; they saw a point at once, and enjoyed a joke so thoroughly.

A little later the whole party were standing on the bank talking of commencing the homeward journey, when a friend of Captain O'Donnell's passed by in a Canadian canoe. He was hailed, and introduced to the rest of the party, and invited to return with them, which he agreed to do.

"Miss Drayton," said Horsley, "may I have the pleasure of taking you out a little way in Mr. Morgan's canoe? It is quite safe, and I will take great care of you!" with an insinuating smile.

"Miss Drayton is coming with me," said Hyacinth, answering for her, "I am anxious to display my powers. Come, Maud, there is no danger; you must use your paddles as I use mine, and we will not go far."

"Are you quite sure it is safe?" said Otho, turning round, and looking very doubtful. They would not listen to him, and settled themselves in the boat. Maud took up her paddle, laughing gaily at her awkwardness, and in a few moments caught the stroke very fairly. The two girls made a very pretty picture as they started—Maud's childish face, well set off by her bright red and white dress which just suited her pretty figure, while Hyacinth, opposite, watched her anxiously. It is very difficult to give a word description of any one, but I wish I could rightly describe Hyacinth's pale clear, cut face, with its earnest grey eyes, and the evening sun lighting up her yellow hair. Up and down they went for a little while, and then Maud dropped her paddle into the water.

Neither of the girls were quite sure of what happened next. Maud stretched forward for the paddle, and instantly the frail craft was overturned, and they were both in the river.

Otho, with two or three others, was still standing on the bank, and heard the scream which Maud gave as she felt herself in the water.

Without a moment's delay, he tore off his coat and jumped in, and O'Donnell followed him; but at that instant the truth escaped his lips. He forgot Maud, as if she had never been there, and cried out, "Hyacinth, keep yourself up! One moment, and I shall reach you!"

She could swim a little, but was weighed down by her dress, and was struggling to reach Maud, who was her first thought. The instant Palmer reached her she panted out, "Maud, save her!"

He grasped her arm, and a few more strokes brought them to the bank. He looked round, though, when she spoke, and saw that O'Donnell had come up to Maud, and that she was quite safe. The two girls were immediately surrounded with sympathy, and warm shawls were wrapped round them. If

was decided that the only thing was to walk as sharply as possible to the nearest inn, about a mile off, where they could change their dripping clothing. Maud was so very pale and quiet that Otho looked anxiously at her, and insisted upon giving her some brandy; but she said she had been frightened, and taking O'Donnell's offered arm they set out for the inn. Hyacinth and Mr. Palmer followed them; the girl's heart was beating wildly. She had fought against herself all day, and now she could not help rejoicing at the love which Otho had so plainly betrayed. It was one of those moments which come sometimes when we least expect them—when we forget the past and the future, and live only in the present.

"Are you cold, Hyacinth? Walk quicker," said Palmer, suddenly.

"No," she answered, "the wetting has done me no harm. I am quite warm."

Her cheeks were burning and her eyes were very bright. He looked down at her, and thought she had never seemed so lovely before.

"That was the biggest fright I ever had," he went on. "I lost my head altogether when I saw you in the water. I forgot that you could swim. Good heavens, Hyacinth, if you had been drowned!" and he pressed her arm tightly to his side.

"Would you have minded very much?" she answered, raising her eyes to his.

He made no reply, but the expression of his face changed, and the smile which I have spoken of before shone in his eyes. They soon reached the inn, where the landlady received them, as if the overturning of a boat were a most everyday occurrence. Nothing was easier than to dry the young ladies' things, and she would lend them dresses in the meanwhile, and, perhaps they would like some tea? The idea was considered a very good one; they all settled themselves very comfortably in the old-fashioned parlour, and Mr. Horley was kind enough to exert himself to prevent the accident throwing a gloom over the party.

CHAPTER V.

THE day following the picnic Mr. Palmer received some bad news. His private income, some hundreds a year, which he had inherited from his mother, through the failure of a bank was entirely gone. In future he would only have his profession to rely upon, and he must no longer take life as easily as he had been in the habit of doing. The philosophical manner in which he bore his loss was worthy of admiration. He told young Anderton, who was prepared to console with him, and listened with a very grave countenance.

"I always thought I should not be much upset by anything of this kind, and do you know I'm quite glad to find I was not mistaken in myself. After all, I must only work harder, and give up a few things. It is better to take things calmly, Anderton, whatever happens," said Otho, lighting a cigar as he spoke.

"This will delay your marriage, won't it?"

"Not very long, I think. I'm making a fair small income at the bar; only, of course, we must begin on a much smaller scale."

Harry Anderton went home with the intelligence which he imparted to his sisters, and to Mrs. Drayton, who by this time had joined her daughter. She was a widow with pleasing manners, a very popular person amongst her friends; a worldly nature, decidedly, but what affection she had was centred in her daughter. She had welcomed Mr. Palmer with much effusion as her future son-in-law; but, as she observed to George Anderton, this would certainly alter the state of matters.

"I would be the last to suggest anything heartless," said the widow, "but I must think of my child. She has been brought up with every comfort, and how could she marry a poor man? Now, I ask you, George, can you imagine Maud living in a poky house and look-

ing after every penny she spends? She has not the strength for it; she would only be miserable."

"But don't you think she will feel it dreadfully if she gives Mr. Palmer up?"

"Of course she will feel it for a little while; but she is so sensible, she knows I only advise her for her own good, and she will get over it."

"Well," returned George, "I'm not in love with anyone myself, I've no time for that sort of thing; but, if I were, no one should influence me, or make me break an engagement off," and with that she went back to her music, and Mrs. Drayton went to find her daughter. She was sitting under a shady tree at the end of the garden, looking very pale.

"I'm afraid that wetting did you harm, my love; you don't seem at all yourself this morning!"

"I am quite well, mamma, only a little tired!" she answered, rather wearily.

"I wanted to speak to you Maud, to tell you something I have heard to-day, but I think I will not say anything about it now."

"Otho is not ill, is he? It is nothing about him?"

"No, he is not ill; but it is about him! He has lost all his money, and I have been thinking about it, and I am quite sure that it would be madness for you to marry him under the circumstances. You are so sensible and good," she went on hurriedly, looking at Maud's face, which was turned away from her, "that I think you will see it is impossible!"

"Does he wish to be free?"

"Oh, no, no, my dear! I've heard nothing of the kind; indeed, I only knew of the loss of the property a little while ago. I'm afraid you will feel it at first—"

"I'll think about it, mamma!" said Maud.

"I would rather not say anything more about it now."

Mrs. Drayton looked at her again. What had come to the child? She was grave and womanly in her manner, and somehow altered. Then she left her, and Maud in her turn began to fight her battle. She knew the whole truth; she saw, too, the way that was opened before her by which she could easily release Mr. Palmer from his engagement to her. But I will not attempt to describe the thoughts that passed over and over again through her mind. Once or twice she heard her name called, but she was hidden from sight, and made no answer, and it was dinner-time before she went back to the house.

Otho asked her where she had been all day? Was she so knocked up that she had seen no one? And then he told her that he wanted to have a talk with her after dinner, and would she go with him for a stroll by the river?

She said she would with pleasure, and then she slipped away and told Harry Anderton to take her in to dinner. She felt that to sit by Otho, and talk on indifferent subjects for the next hour, was more than she could bear.

The sun was setting as they left the garden, and walked along the bank. For some time neither broke the silence, and then Otho spoke.—

"Maud, I've bad news! I've lost all my money; but perhaps you have heard by this time?"

"Yes," she said, I have heard of your loss to-day, and I'm very, very sorry!"

"It's rather sad; but we won't be disheartened, dear! I'm much more sorry on your account than I am for myself. I meant that you should have had a very pleasant life, little woman, and now things will not be as smooth as I expected, but I know you will be content, and—and, I think you'll be happy, my dear, in spite of the money!" He spoke in the kind, affectionate tone he always used to Maud. He never spoke hastily or harshly to her, as he had often done to Hyacinth. She looked up at him and tried to answer him, but there was a choking sensation in her throat which stopped her.

"Why, Maud, you look quite fagged and

done up! That wetting has shaken your nerves, I think. We won't go any farther; sit down, and rest on this stile for a little while."

"Otho, I want to speak to you!"

"You're tired now, child!" he said, interrupting her; "wait till to-morrow, it's nothing very important, I know."

"Yes, it is! and I must say it now." She leaned forward, and put one little hand on his shoulder. "Otho, yesterday, when I fell into the river I found out something. You remember, dear, you forgot everything but Hyacinth, and I saw,—no, don't stop me,—I saw that you love her, and that you are crashing all that down and mean to be true to me, but I will not have that. Mind, I don't blame you for one instant, and I don't blame her—"

"Oh, Maud, I never meant you to know this!"

"I know that, I see it all now. Do you know, for months I have doubted whether I could make you happy; but I am quite sure of one thing, we should both be miserable if I married you now. And I'm not going to lose you altogether. Hyacinth will be my sister, and you will be my brother, and you will see," smiling, "I shall soon be quite lively again. I'm not going to grieve one bit."

Otho was holding her hands tenderly in his. He bent his head and kissed them reverently, but he could not speak.

"And, do you know, I'm getting quite clever. I've arranged it all in my own mind. I am going to break off my engagement with you now you have lost all your money, because I could not marry a poor man. You didn't think I was worldly, did you?"

"No one who knows you, dear, will believe that story."

"Oh, yes, they will! for mamma says it would never do for me to marry you now, and of course I must obey her, mustn't I?"

"I think you are the most unselfish and the sweetest girl possible," said Otho. She coloured slightly at his words, and then taking a diamond ring from her finger she said, gently, "You must take this ring back, Otho, but I will keep your other presents."

"I couldn't take it, Maud. Never speak of it again. You must keep it always. Surely you may take it from your brother?"

"Very well, I will keep it then," she answered, replacing it on her finger as simply as a child would have done.

"Maud, I don't mean just yet, but after a while, you'll marry George Armstrong, won't you? You know his affection for you ever since you were children together. I shall reproach myself less if I think you are happy as you would be with him. He's such a thoroughly good fellow, and you know you do like him."

"Dear old George! Yes, I do like him, indeed; and it may end so. Who knows?" she said, looking up brightly at him, and bravely keeping the least shade of sorrow from her voice.

Then they started homewards, and Maud said that she and her mother were leaving Boynford the next day.

"I would rather go away at once," she said, "and we will say nothing of all this to the people here."

"I am going to-morrow also. My time is up, and I must set to work at once."

"You'll tell this to Hyacinth before you go, won't you? I would much rather you would. I know how she must have suffered all this time, and I should so like to know that she is happy before I leave her."

He made no answer; he was reproaching himself that he was so ready to be set free, and that he was hungering for a sight of Hyacinth's face, and for the look of joy that he knew he should see at last in the sweet grey eyes.

"Don't go by any of the early trains, Otho," said Maud, at breakfast next day. "When I have finished my packing I'll come to the morning-room, and say good-bye," and with that she went upstairs. She had sent word to Hyacinth of her departure, and had given

orders that she was to come at once to her room.

"What is the meaning of this sudden flight, Maud? I shall miss you dreadfully."

"Mamma is in a hurry to get home, dearest, so we made up our minds to go at once, but we will often write, and you will come and see me before very long, Hyacinth. That is a promise, mind."

As Maud was speaking she was still debating whether she should tell her that all was over between herself and Otho, but she hesitated. Brave as she was, she dreaded mentioning his name, and yet she wanted to see Hyacinth happy before she left her. That was the reward she had promised herself, and she would not be defrauded of it. The two girls went on talking for awhile, Maud very cheerfully; and then she asked Hyacinth to fetch her music from the morning-room.

"You will find my songs lying about somewhere. Will you get them for me?" she said.

And then when she was left alone she covered her face with her hands and cried a little, but not for very long. The sweet, childlike heart will soon be happy again, and the pain she is feeling now will be forgotten. There are still some natures left so free from jealousy and self-love that they remain like little children all their lives.

And so Hyacinth, going into the morning-room, met Otho. She had not seen him since that day upon the river. He started, and came forward to her at once.

"Maud has told you," he said, eagerly.

"No, Maud has told me nothing, except that she is going away."

"Ah, she would not speak of her own good deeds. Hyacinth, she found out that I loved you, though you know how I tried to hide it, and she has set me free. She has given you to me, and she will be our sister. Have you not a word for me?" he went on, laying his hands upon her shoulders.

"But, Otho, is it right that we should let her do this?"

"Yes, love, yes! It is right now; you need not fear any longer. Dearest, I meant to have gone away without saying anything to you, but when I saw you I could not keep silence. Are you happy now? Hyacinth, tell me?"

She made no answer in words, but I suppose Otho was satisfied, for he asked no more questions.

[THE END.]

"Dad, were you ever a fish?" The individual thus addressed lowered his chin and gazed over his spectacles at the boy in speechless astonishment. "Oh, don't get mad at me, dad, for asking you," continued his inquisitive offspring. "Mrs. Cooly came in after you had gone yesterday, and asked me what she would do if you were dead, and me laughed and said she guessed there were just as good salmon in the sea as you are."

MADAME RUDERSDORFF was a great favourite with the Princess Royal of England, who is now the Crown Princess of Prussia. Shortly after the marriage of the Princess, Madame Rudersdorff sang at a Court concert at Berlin, and was invited by the Crown Princess to breakfast with her. They breakfasted together informally, and afterwards madame sang several songs of Handel's, the Princess's favourite composer, her Royal hostess playing her accompaniments. After a while, the Princess proposed a visit to the nursery. As madame was sitting on the floor, with one child playing with the charms on her watch-chain, another hanging over her shoulder, and the baby in her arms, the door opened, and the Crown Prince walked in. The Princess arose and introduced her visitor. Madame looked up, and, with her ready tact and wit, said, "Your Royal Highness, I must either disregard Court etiquette or drop the baby." The Prince bowed courteously, and said with a smile, "Do what you like with etiquette, but regard the baby."

WHICH WAS THE HEIRESS?

CHAPTER VIII.

DIANA hurried away from her rejected suitor, her heart beating quick and fast with excitement, and ran up the steps of Mrs. Mainwaring's pretty little cottage.

The lady was evidently expecting her, for the door was opened, as soon as she rapped upon it, by a kind-looking, elderly woman with the appearance of a lady's maid. This personage conducted her to the small neat parlour, and withdrew.

Mrs. Mainwaring met her at the door and conducted her to a sofa, seating herself beside her, and taking the girl's slender hand gently in her own.

"My dear, you tremble. Have you been frightened by anything? Did you come alone?"

"Part of the way," stammered Diana. "I met Mr. Delamere after I crossed the lawn, and he came with me to your cottage, and is waiting to take me back."

"Delamere—Delamere!" exclaimed the mysterious lady, with a violent start. "Where did he come from, child?"

"He is from the Highlands, madam, and has been making the tour of Scotland with Sir Harold Meredith."

Mrs. Mainwaring drew back, pressing her small white hands over her heart, her features convulsed with emotion.

"Harold Meredith here!" she murmured; then in a louder tone she said: "Are these gentlemen here with your party, Miss Rainsforth?"

"Yes, madam," answered Diana, looking at her in surprise. "Lord Waverley, my cousin Grace's grandfather, has sent for her, and they are going to take her with them. They start next week."

"Lord Waverley has sent for her!" repeated the beautiful lady, in a tone of surprise.

"Mrs. Mainwaring, do you know Lord Waverley, or any of these people of whom we have been speaking?" asked Diana, looking at her keenly.

"I, my child? How should I know them?" asked the lady, in sudden confusion. "And yet I will tell you this much. I have lost a friend who wore a locket like Grace Rainsforth's, and, strange to say, little Diana, you remind me of that friend, though you are dark, and he was fair-haired and blue-eyed. Yet you have his voice and smile, and I cannot choose but love you for his sake!"

She drew the girl into her arms and kissed her brow and lips with sudden, passionate emotion; then gently releasing her, she said:

"Darling, you must forgive my weakness. I am a lonely woman, with none to love me, and you remind me so much of one so long since dead, that you do not seem like a stranger."

Diana lifted the delicate white hand to her lips and kissed it, as she answered thoughtfully:

"Madam, I have the same feeling towards you. You do not seem like a stranger to me, for you also remind me of one whom I have loved."

"Of whom do I remind you, Diana?" she asked, looking fondly at the blushing speaker.

Diana hesitated a moment.

"Tell me, dear," said Mrs. Mainwaring, gently.

"You make me think of my cousin Grace's mother," answered Diana.

"You—you never saw her!" exclaimed Mrs. Mainwaring, looking fixedly at the girl.

"No, I never saw her—she died a few months after her daughter's birth. But I used to wear the locket with her picture around my neck. I loved the beautiful portrait—I cannot tell why," continued Diana, with a slight blush, "but I was sorry when Grace took it away from me to wear herself. And Mrs. Mainwaring, you make me think of that picture. Your hair is grey, but your eyes, your features,

both remind me of my unfortunate Aunt Agatha."

"Tell me of her," breathed the lady, in a stifled voice.

"I know but little to tell," answered Diana, simply. "She was the youngest daughter of the Earl of Waverley. She ran away and married my uncle, Reginald Rainsforth, and her father disowned and disinherited her. Her husband brought her home to Scotland, and then he had some trouble with my father owing to the loss of his fortune, which papa, who was his guardian, had invested for him. Papa says that my uncle tried to kill him, and ran away thinking that he had accomplished his purpose. He was never seen nor heard of afterwards. His poor wife, Lady Agatha, lost her reason when she heard the story. Her daughter was born that night, but she never knew it, for her mind was completely shattered, and she died a few months later in a madhouse."

"She died—who says so?" asked Mrs. Mainwaring, looking at Diana strangely.

"Papa told me so," answered Diana, calmly.

The lady clasped her hands together and murmured something to herself of which Diana only caught a fragment of a sentence. She silently repeated that fragment to herself.

"A cruel wrong!"

"What can she mean?" thought the little maiden to herself.

"I thank you for telling me so much, Diana," said the strange lady, recovering herself. "Will you humour my caprice further, and tell me of yourself and Grace? How have you been reared? Where were you born?"

"We both were born in a Lowland town, Mrs. Mainwaring, but papa removed to the Highlands, while I was in my infancy. He lost his fortune in an unlucky speculation, and had only a pittance left to live upon. So he bought only a secluded home in the mountains, where we have lived ever since. Grace was sent to a boarding-school at Stirling and educated, while I picked up a little learning at home. Mamma died when we were children. She as well as papa always loved Grace best, and she and I lived as sisters, and believed ourselves such until a few days ago, when we learned the truth about our relationship."

"How did you learn the truth, Diana?" asked Mrs. Mainwaring, looking deeply interested.

"Grace's grandfather sent for her, and then papa told us the secret," answered Diana, looking earnestly at the lady, whose every look and movement showed an earnest, overmastering agitation which she tried hard to repress.

"Why did he send for his granddaughter?" was the next question.

"All his other children were dead," said Diana, very softly and gently, as if in some subtle way she knew that those words would pain the listener. "They all were dead, he was old and lonely. He wanted to forgive Lady Agatha and her husband, and take them home again. He sent Sir Harold Meredith and Arthur Delamere to find them. But," said Diana, with a deep, unconscious sigh, "Uncle Reginald and Aunt Agatha both were dead, and there was no one but Grace, and she is going back with them."

She ceased speaking, and there was a long silence. Mrs. Mainwaring had buried her face on the arm of the sofa, and her whole graceful form was trembling with emotion, but not a sound escaped her lips. In the silence Diana could hear the sound of the gay dance music in the hotel, mellowed and sweetened by the distance, and outside on the gravelled path the monotonous tramp of Arthur Delamere's feet, as he walked up and down and waited for her.

Mrs. Mainwaring looked up at last with an altered face. It was sad and melancholy still, but there was a look of peace upon it that it had not worn before.

"Diana," she said, looking curiously at the girl, "have you never wished that you instead of Grace were the Earl's granddaughter?"

Diana flushed and hesitated, then she said, with sweet frankness:

"Yes, Mrs. Mainwaring, I have sometimes wished that I could put myself in Grace's place."

"You thought it would be a fine thing to have a beautiful home, fine dresses, and jewels?" said Mrs. Mainwaring, looking sharply at her.

Diana flushed brightly under that searching glance.

"I declare to you, madam," she said, earnestly, "that I have never once thought of these things in connection with my envy of Grace. You will laugh at me, perhaps, but I will tell you the truth. I loved the beautiful face in the locket I had worn from childhood. I envied my cousin her lovely, unfortunate mother more than all the glories that will be hers as the Earl's granddaughter."

"Diana," said Mrs. Mainwaring, drawing the girl fondly into the clasp of her arm, "did you ever hear of a fairy godmother?"

"Oh, yes!" said the girl, smiling. "They are the good fairies who grant even the most unreasonable wishes in the fairy stories."

Mrs. Mainwaring smiled gently.

"My little one," she said, softly, "I am going to leave here in a few hours, but you will see me and hear from me again. I want you to give me your address on a card now. And, Diana, until I see you again, will you think of me kindly as of a fairy godmother?"

"I do not understand you," said Diana, giving her a puzzled look while she scribbled her address on a card, and put it in the lady's hand.

"You do not? Well, never mind," said Mrs. Mainwaring, with a sigh and a smile. "I mean that I may bring you good tidings some day. Now good-night, my darling girl. Your friend may be impatient, waiting so long."

She kissed and embraced Diana, and accompanied her to the door, watching her as she ran down the steps, and a smile of pleasure curved her lips as she saw how eagerly Arthur Delamere joined her.

CHAPTER IX.

DIANA had not walked ten paces from the cottage with Arthur Delamere beside her, when she was confronted by her father. He was walking toward her at a rapid gait, and as soon as he saw her he sprang forward and caught her almost roughly by the arm.

"Diana, where have you been?" he exclaimed, sharply.

Diana looked up at him in surprise. He did not usually trouble himself about her movements. She shook off the grasp of his arm, and said, gently:

"Don't, papa, you hurt me! I have been to see Mrs. Mainwaring."

"What business did you have with that woman?" he inquired, roughly.

"She asked me to come," said Diana, without a suspicion that her own interests demanded that she should keep that fact a secret.

"Oh! she did—did she? And what business did she have with you?" he inquired, with increasing agitation and anger. The fact was, Grace had told him of the incident of that evening, and he had become unaccountably excited over it—so much so that he had gone straight from the ball-room to seek his neglected daughter. Finding her absent, he had rightly conjectured that she had gone to the cottage of the mysterious lady whose curiosity had so affronted Grace. He immediately went to seek her, with what result we have seen.

"Good evening, Mr. Rainsforth," said Arthur Delamere, with a significant cough, as a gentle reminder to the irate gentleman of the presence of a third party.

"Ah! good evening, Mr. Delamere," said the gentleman, turning with a start. "Pardon me for overlooking you. The fact is, I was so vexed with my little girl here for running off

so indiscreetly after a strange woman of whom she knows nothing, that I—"

"I did not suppose you would care, papa," interrupted Diana, quickly. "You have never taken any account of my coming and going. Why should you do so now?"

Mr. Rainsforth bit his lip at this spirited reminder.

"Tut, child," he said, in some confusion; "your remark would lead our kind friend here to suppose me a careless father. I must assure him in explanation that in the safety and seclusion of our mountain home no surveillance was necessary. In a public place like this it is quite different."

"Certainly," assented Mr. Delamere, as the speaker paused for a reply.

"Ah! by the way," said Mr. Rainsforth, a sudden thought striking him, "were you, too, visiting Mrs. Mainwaring, sir?"

Delamere hesitated a moment. He saw that Mr. Rainsforth required an explanation of his presence with his daughter.

"No, sir," he said, stiffly, after that momentary pause for thought. "I saw Miss Rainsforth leaving the cottage alone, and I volunteered my escort, thinking it perhaps unsafe for her to go back alone."

"Quite right, sir, quite right, my own feelings exactly. I assure you," said Mr. Rainsforth, quickly. "But now that she has her father to take care of her she will not trespass further on your kindness."

Thus blandly dismissed Mr. Delamere bowed coldly, and walked away, leaving the father and daughter to pursue their moonlight walk alone.

No further words passed between them until they had reached the hotel, and gone up to Diana's room. Then Mr. Rainsforth turned the key in the lock, and spoke abruptly to his daughter.

"Now, Diana, you will inform me at once on what errand you were summoned to the cottage of that impertinent woman!"

Diana stared at him in blank silence. She resented the tone of authority in which he spoke. Her proud spirit rose in rebellion.

"Mr. Rainsforth!" she said at length, "you will have to adopt a more conciliatory tone before I gratify your curiosity."

His face grew white, his knees trembled at her words.

"Mr. Rainsforth!" he gasped. "Diana, what do you mean by addressing your own father thus?"

She looked him steadily in the eyes as he cowered before her, and her red lip curled scornfully.

"I mean," she answered, steadily, "that I will not address you as a father until you treat me like a daughter. You commanded me like a slave, but I will not oblige you now to any mortal living!"

He was angry enough to have struck her down at his feet, but a certain relief came into his face at her cool explanation. He hastened to say in apology:

"My dear, I was so vexed at finding that you had gone off alone to visit that strange woman, that I am not answerable for what I said in the heat of anger. You must forgive me, and tell me what she wanted of you. You are too young, and too innocent, my dear, to have secrets from your elders. Believe me, I know best what is for your good."

Diana was somewhat mollified by his humble apology, but she still answered a little impatiently:

"I have not tried to have any secret from you, sir. The lady did not have any particular business with me. She had only taken a fancy to me because I reminded her of a person who is dead."

"Indeed? Did she tell you the person's name?" inquired Mr. Rainsforth, with a searching glance.

"She did not," answered Diana, calmly.

"What did she talk to you about?" he asked, eagerly.

"Of myself, and of Grace," said Diana, giving him a curious look. "She asked me

where we were born, how we had been reared, and similar questions."

"Impertinent!" muttered Mr. Rainsforth. "Well, and how did you reply to these questions, my dear?"

"I told her all that I knew," said Diana, calmly.

"Which was not much," muttered the listener to himself.

"You are right, sir," answered the girl, overhearing the words. "It was but little I knew to tell. It never struck me how very little I knew about myself until Mrs. Mainwaring talked to me to-night. I could not even tell her where I was born. You had told me I was born in the Lowlands, and that was all. I did not even know the name of the town."

"I wonder at your telling her what little you did know," said Mr. Rainsforth, with a dark frown. "I should have thought that a girl of your high spirit would have resented such unwarrantable curiosity and impertinence from a mere stranger."

"That was the strangest part of it, papa," said the girl, earnestly and innocently. "She did not seem like a stranger to me, but rather like one I had known and loved for years. I felt so sorry for her, too. She has known great sorrow, I am sure!"

Her great dark eyes grew misty, and her face softened into tenderness as she spoke.

"Why did you think so?" he inquired, with a slight sneer.

"I thought so for several reasons," said Diana, gravely. "The first was because her long, thick hair was quite white. She looked too young and beautiful for time to have changed its colour, and I am sure that some great and sudden grief must have caused the change. She looked very sad, too; even her voice had a mournful tone in it. Whatever her sorrow has been, papa, it was a terrible and lasting one!"

"You are too young to be a proper judge," he said, sharply.

"Perhaps so," she answered, quietly, but he knew that she did not give credence to his assertion.

He paced up and down the floor impatiently for a while, then turned back to his daughter.

"Diana," he said, sharply. "I forbid your holding any further communication with that woman. If she sends for you do not go; if she accosts you anywhere do not notice or reply to her. She is a mad woman. I will not have you mixed up with her in any way!"

Diana was at the window, with her back turned to him. She did not turn round, did not in any way notice the imperious command.

"Diana, do you hear me?" he inquired, after vainly waiting for an answer.

"Yes, I heard you," she replied, laconically.

"Will you do as I bid you?" he inquired.

Diana whirled round from the window, and measured the impatient speaker with a cool, defiant eye.

"I am not prepared to give you an affirmative reply to-night, sir. I will consider your command, and let you know my decision in the morning."

The cool, defiant reply exasperated Mr. Rainsforth almost beyond endurance. He sprang forward and clutched the speaker by her slight shoulder as if he would have shaken the life out of that slender frame. But at length she wrenched herself free from his ruffianly grasp, and stood beside a chair panting for breath.

"How dare you make such an impudent reply to your father's command?" he shouted at her stormily.

She stood silent, looking at him with flashing eyes, her slight form quivering with passionate indignation. At length she uttered a few words in a low, intense, concentrated voice:

"I do not believe that you are my father!" was what she said.

CHAPTER X.

Mrs. RAINSFORTH stood like one petrified, as Diana's words, spoken in the heat of passionate resentment, fell on his hearing. His face grew ashen white, his lips fell apart in a rigid line, his eyes glared at her stonily. He looked like a statue of terror.

The indignant girl, looking at him so scornfully, was surprised at the effect of her angry words.

"Why should my words affect him so strangely?" she thought, wondering.

He saw the surprise and wonder in the expressive young face, and by a powerful effort shook off the lethargy that had fallen upon him.

"What—what did you mean by those words, Diana?" he demanded, in a voice that trembled with fear. "Who says that I am not—not your father?"

"I say so!" answered Diana, spiritedly. "What father would maltreat his child as you did me? What father would rear a daughter and neglect her as you have neglected me, lavishing all your means and all your affection on the child of one whom you have declared was your deadly enemy? It is unnatural and impossible. I could sooner believe that Grace, whom you have pampered and petted all her life, is your own child, and that I myself am Lord Waverley's granddaughter!"

The thought had occurred to her with the swiftness of the lightning's flash, and in her anger she had given it instant expression. But was not prepared for the terrible rage it excited in the man before her.

The perspiration started out on his livid features, his eyes glared like a madman's as he sprang towards her.

Seizing her rudely by her shoulders, he shook her until her breath was nearly gone.

"You little she-demon!" he hissed in her ears. "Dare to tell me such a thing again, dare to breathe such a suspicion abroad, and I will kill you—kill you, do you hear?"

He seized her by the shoulders and shook her violently, then threw her from him with such force that she fell upon the floor. Without waiting to see the effect of his cruelty, he hurried out of the room.

"Little demon!" he muttered again, as he descended the stairs. "Her tongue has sealed her fate!"

He went out upon the lawn and directed his steps towards Mrs. Mainwaring's cottage.

"I will try to get a look at that mysterious woman," he muttered. "Surely, surely, it cannot be—"

He paused, and would not give expression to the name, but the very thought of it caused his frame to tremble, and the dew of terror beaded his high forehead.

Walking slowly along, he gained the cottage which he had seen Diana leaving a short time before.

A subdued light gleamed through the window which was shutterless, and protected only by curtains of white lace.

Mr. Rainsforth peered cautiously around him. There was no one in sight, and he softly opened the gate of the small front yard, and stepped within. Then he stepped forward and peeped into the window, whose lowest pane of glass was just upon a level with his eyes. For several minutes he continued to gaze cautiously into the apartment, then quite suddenly he dropped upon the ground, and crouched there, trembling with terror.

"My soul," he muttered, huskily. "All the fiends below have conspired against me!"

Heremained in his crouching position several minutes longer, then quietly rose and peered through the lace curtains again.

The lady whose mere sight had inspired Mr. Rainsforth with such terror lay upon the sofa, wrapped in a warm, white cashmere dressing-gown, her white hands pressed upon her heart as if in pain. She had been weeping, and in the brilliant light that shone through the room the dew of tears was still visible upon the dark fringe of her silken lashes. An elderly maid

across the room was busy pouring some dark coloured drops from a small vial into a wine-glass half filled with water.

"Here, madam," she said, gently, as she crossed the room, "you had better take your drops. This agitation is very bad for you."

Mrs. Mainwaring lifted her head, and drained the potion obediently.

"My kind, faithful Barbara," she said, looking gratefully at her patient attendant. "I do not believe my present agitation can hurt me. I have been weeping, it is true, but my tears were tears of gladness. I have had tidings of great joy."

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed Barbara, fervently. "Was the young girl who visited you the bearer of your good news?"

"Yes, although she was not aware of it. Sit down by me, Barbara, and I will tell you about it, that your faithful heart may rejoice with me."

Barbara brought a chair and sat down by the side of the sofa, and the man outside listened intently, anxious to catch the import of their talk. But either through weakness or excessive caution, the lady lowered her voice to a whisper, and he could not understand the low, agitated murmurs in which she spoke to her faithful attendant.

"I can very well guess what she is talking of, though," he muttered, with a terrible scowl of hate at the unconscious woman. "And now—now I must hit upon some plan to secure her everlasting silence. The future of my daughter and myself hang trembling in the balance. I cannot afford to be squeamish now. I must strike at once, and in the dark!"

He moved away silently, and went back to the hotel where Grace reigned conspicuous among the brilliant beauties gathered there from every part of the country. Her beauty and the odour of romance that hung round her made her quite a belle. Mr. Rainsforth went into the ball-room and told Grace that he was unwell, and would retire to his room if she would excuse him. She readily consented to do so, and consigning her to the care of Sir Harold Meredith he went away.

But in the "dead waste and middle of the night," when the ball-room was deserted and everything was still in slumber, when the moon had gone down, and the world was wrapped in darkness, he stole forth again and took his way to Mrs. Mainwaring's cottage.

All was calm and silent there. The lights were extinguished, the inmates sound asleep. He crawled under the front porch and remained there a few minutes, then came out and went around to the back part of the house. In a little while he stole cautiously back to the hotel, and went up to his room and to bed.

After a little, as he lay trembling under the bedclothes, he heard men's voices out on the lawn shouting, "Fire! Fire! Fire!" He sprang up, and looking out of the window, saw the pretty cottage of Mrs. Mainwaring wrapped in a winding sheet of lurid flame.

CHAPTER XI.

QUITE a panic ensued after the rapid reiteration of that frenzied cry of fire. The green lawn directly became alive with people who had sprung from their beds at the first alarm, hurried into their clothing, and rushed out in quest of the cause. Women as well as men were seen eddying towards the burning building which at once became the cynosure of all eyes.

"Is anybody there?" "Is it occupied?" "Is it possible to save the adjacent cottages?" These were some of the questions people anxiously asked of each other as they hurried along. No one inquired if the burning cottage could be saved. They knew that was impossible. The fire had already gained such headway that the building was almost wrapped in flames, and the men rapidly set about measures of precaution to prevent the fire from communicating to the adjacent cottages.

Amid the wild terror and confusion a girl's

voice suddenly rang out shrilly and sharply on the air:

"Oh Heavens! Mrs. Mainwaring is in there! She will be burned to death! Will no one save her?"

People pressed forward and saw a young girl, with frightened dark eyes and streaming hair, rushing wildly up and down before the cottage, crying out that her friend would be burned to death unless some one would go into the house and awaken her. But no one responded to those wild appeals. The venture was one too full of danger to be lightly undertaken. The woman who lay sleeping in that terrible funeral pyre was a stranger, and had been at the hotel so short a time that none had formed her acquaintance or become interested in her. Rescue seemed impossible. The bravest shook their heads in despair, and the women wept aloud at the thought of her danger.

But suddenly while every eye was concentrated on the burning house, and every heart throbbled with the expectation of seeing the doomed woman appear amid the flames at some door or window, a slender figure was seen rushing forward toward the burning porch. The next moment the girlish form sprang with lightning speed across the fiery threshold, and disappeared in the volume of thick, black smoke that filled the hall-way.

"Diana has gone into that awful place! Oh, Heaven, she will be burned alive!" exclaimed Grace Rainsforth, excitedly.

"Be quiet, love," said her uncle, on whose arm she was leaning. "We cannot help it if she chooses to throw away her life so rashly."

She looked up at him in surprise, but he had buried his face in his hands to hide the look of demoniacal joy that overspread it when Diana rushed into the burning building.

"Good heavens, Lady Grace," exclaimed an excited voice, "was it Diana that rushed into yon terrible holocaust?"

It was the voice of Arthur Delamere. He had just reached the spot in time to see the slender form disappear through the burning door-way, and to hear Grace's shocked ejaculation.

"Yes, it was Diana," she answered, with a terrible shudder.

"Oh, Heaven!" he cried, in a voice of anguish. "Then I will save her, or perish with her!"

He tore a silk handkerchief from his pocket, dipped it in a pail of water a man was carrying, bound it about his head and face, and darted impetuously forward.

Mr. Rainsforth sprang forward and caught him by the arm.

"Are you mad?" he cried. "You can never come out of that terrible place alive!"

Arthur Delamere turned one flashing glance on the face of the inhuman father.

"Your daughter is in there," he said, with terrible sternness. "Do you wish her perish, coward?"

He threw off the man's grasp as if he had been a poisonous viper, and sprang forward with dauntless heroism.

The next moment the dark form was seen a moment, awfully distinct amid the leaping, serpent-like flames, and then it disappeared in the smoke of the hall-way as Diana's had done.

Mr. Rainsforth sank upon the ground and hid his face in his hands. He knew that people would expect him to make some demonstration of alarm at the imminent peril of his only daughter, and he was willing to make that much concession to public opinion, but the face that was hidden behind the hypocritical hands was convulsed with fiendish joy.

"Every obstacle is removed from my path at one fell stroke!" he muttered to himself.

Meanwhile Arthur Delamere rushed through the black volumes of smoke that filled the hall-way of the burning cottage, his heart full of sickening apprehension.

The rapid flames had not communicated with the flooring yet, but the small rooms were

filled with blinding smoke and terrible scorching heat. The young man felt as if he would shrivel into ashes like a slip of paper, in that dreadful atmosphere, but he ran hurriedly from one small room to the other, shouting and calling, and straining his eyes through the hot, black smoke in quest of Diana and the mysterious lady she had come to rescue.

There were but four rooms in the house. He had gone through three of them and found them empty, and his heart was beginning to fail him when he rushed into the thick darkness of the hall again to enter the fourth one.

Blinded by the smoke and heat, he could see nothing, but as he stepped over the threshold his foot tripped over a soft body on the floor. With a cry of horror he bent down and peered into the face of the recumbent figure.

Oh, horror! it was Diana Rainsforth lying there pale and still, without a sign of life!

At the same moment he heard a loud, tumultuous cry of horror from the throng outside. It instantly apprised him that some new and sudden peril menaced him. With desperate haste he caught the slender form of the unconscious girl in his arms and made another terrible rush through the hall. On the threshold he paused an instant, almost daunted by the awful peril of the burning porch, then with a swift, courageous bound he cleared it and landed on the gravel path outside.

He was not an instant too soon, for at that moment the heavy, ornate roof fell in with an awful crash.

Delamere staggered forward a few paces, dropped his lifeless burden on the grass, and knelt down beside her, too exhausted to stand.

People crowded round with restoratives, and when Diana opened her flame-scorched eyes again, she looked straight into the anxious eyes of the young Englishman, and asked, piteously:

"Did any one save them? I mean Mrs. Mainwaring and her maid?"

He shook his head sadly, and then rumour ran from lip to lip that two women had perished in that terrible holocaust of flame.

(To be continued.)

ORIGIN OF FENCING.—From the first invention of the sword down to the period when the fifteenth century was drawing to a close, the weapon had always been used as an arm of offence. The person using it thrust or hewed it into the body of his antagonist whenever he had a chance, and the only defence against it was a stout armour or an interposed shield. It is not to be supposed that an ancient warrior, or one belonging to the earlier Middle Ages, never thrust aside or parried with his own a stroke of his enemy's; but this method of defence was not depended upon in those days; the breast-plate, the helmet, or the buckler was expected to shield the soldier while he was endeavouring to get his own sword into some unprotected portion of the body of his antagonist. But about the time of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain the science of fencing was invented. This new system of fighting gave an entirely new use to the sword. It now became a weapon of defence as well of offence. Long, slender rapiers, sharpened only at the point, were the swords used in fencing. Armed with one of these a gallant knight or high-toned courier, who chose the new method of combat, disdained the use of armour; the strokes of his opponent were warded off by his own light weapon, and whichever of the two contestants was enabled to disarm the other, or deliver a thrust which could not be parried, could drive the sharp point of his rapier into the body of his opponent if he felt so inclined. The rapier, which was adopted to combat two persons, and not for general warfare, soon became the weapon of the duellist; and as duels used to be as common as law-suits are now, it was thought necessary that a man should know how to fence, and thus protect the life and honour of himself, his family, and his friends.

WITHIN AN ACE.

MISS DORMER made a charming fair picture, as she stood leaning in an attitude of weary abandon she did not often affect, and Mervyn Charlton coming quietly into the room between the portières of amber velvet, thought that he never had done a wiser, a better deed than when, a week before, he had asked her to marry him and be mistress of his magnificent place.

She had sought an opportunity and slipped away from the dancers, eager to let the mask drop from her face, if only a moment—the mask of smiling content and happiness that it was expected she would wear, because she was young and fair, and devotedly waited upon by the richest man in her set, who could lavish every imaginable luxury and extravagance upon her.

Yet this fair girl, so favoured of the gods, had come away from the music, and the lights, and the gaiety, to this little retired place, where she could rest a moment and regain her ordinary calm hauteur, and make ready, in words the decision she had; no hesitation in admitting to her own heart—her decision to tell Mervyn Charlton that she should not marry him.

Her heart-story was an ordinary one—a pitiful one; for pitiful romances are so common in every-day life, and Madoline Dormer was no exception.

She did not in the least care for Mervyn Charlton or his money, and she could not tell the time when she had not cared for Lionel Selwyn, who, as far as she knew, had never given her the second thought.

That was one of the thoughts that was hurting her so keenly and making her look so wistfully pitiful as Mervyn Charlton came towards her—that miserable knowledge that she had given her heart unasked, unwanted.

Then his pleasant voice startled her just a trifle, and she looked up with not the least welcome or gladness in her face that her suitor had; come to the quiet little nook in quest of her.

And Mervyn, seeing the indifference on her face, felt a little hot quiver of anger all over him, and for a second compressed his lips under his moustache. Then he smiled, as he walked up near her.

"I saw you leave the dancing-room, Madoline, and I have been all impatience to follow you—indeed, I have been all impatience ever since I saw you a week ago, and you promised me happiness to-night."

She looked quickly at him, then a faint pallor overspread her face.

"I think you are mistaken, Mr. Charlton, that I promised anything definite, although it certainly will be for your happiness that I decline the honour you have offered me."

He smiled in a way that somehow made her blood chill.

"Then you will not allow me to be the judge of my happiness? You certainly take a commendably pleasant way of refusing me, Madoline; but I am a man who does not like to be disappointed. And I have set my heart on having you for my wife."

There was a patient resolution and incomprehensible exultation in his firm, quiet tones, that brought the warm colour to her cheeks and made her lift her head in haughty questioning, as words in answer came almost hotly to her lips.

"My reply is most positive, Mr. Charlton. I—I do not love you, and to any ordinary man that reason would be sufficient."

"But I am not an ordinary man, and your reason is remarkably insufficient. I am perfectly aware you do not care for me; and I am also equally aware of your penchant for Mr. Selwyn."

He smiled as he saw the guilty flush surge to her proud face. Then he went on, quite matter-of-factly:

"But I love you, and that is sufficient reason for me. I have tried hard honestly to win you.

I can give you the luxuries women like, and will envy. I have failed, it seems, not so much because you don't care for me, as because you do care for—this Selwyn. I have failed, it seems, now. You have refused me, and yet, Miss Dormer, before I leave this room I intend to have received your promise to marry me."

She drew her lithe figure up in indignation, her blue eyes flashing withering scorn at him, her beautiful lips expressing a contempt that made him rage in his heart. Then a sudden, amused smile parted her lips.

"Indeed!"

He stepped nearer her—so near he could have touched her hot cheek with his lips. She simply drew her skirts away from him with her dainty, white-gloved hand and threw her head backward.

He saw the act, and if he had not known he was holding the trump card, he would scarcely have been able to have restrained an oath of fury.

As it was, he withdrew several steps, with marked, elaborate courtesy.

"I seem particularly unfortunate in incurring your displeasure. May I hope you will listen a moment longer, while I tell you why you will consent to marry me, for all you love Lionel Selwyn?"

The cool, resolute insolence in his tones was almost more than she could endure. But she simply looked straight in his bold, determined eyes, as she answered,—

"I suppose I shall be obliged to listen to anything you may dare to say to me, since I do not see fit to annoy my hostess by a scene. Proceed, Mr. Charlton."

She suffered a little taunting smile to come to her beautiful lips, as she leaned indifferently against the side of the tall chair, looking so exceedingly fair and sweet, so exceedingly unapproachable, that Charlton's pulses throbbed madly with passionate admiration, and fury at her icy coolness and contempt.

He guarded himself well, however, and his manner and tone were wonderfully quiet and convincing, as he went on, with a courtesy that curdled her blood as the force of his words began to tell on her,—

"A week ago, Miss Dormer, certain discrepancies came to light in the transactions of the bank of which, as you are aware, I hold one office, and your brother another. Those discrepancies have to-day been tracked to your brother's door, and only at my request, and through my influence, have they been kept from the public, and Ernest Dormer from arrest for embezzlement of funds amounting to a thousand pounds—through my influence until I could see you. Madoline, you can marry me, and I will save your brother—save your parents from a knowledge that will break their hearts—save him from disgrace and the gaol. Madoline, if you do not marry me, you have the alternative. Your choice lies before you."

A sudden, ashen horror had come into her face as he spoke, that deepened into a rigid, paralyzing fear as his quiet, convincing words carried their weight of truth with them.

Then a quick look of disgusted rage at Charlton's power over her was on her face—then an expression of piteous desperation followed it—and he read every changing feeling she experienced as readily as though it had been printed in a book.

For a moment neither of them said a word. Then Madoline gave a low, gasping answer,—

"How can you? How dare you? I do not believe you—you cruel, cruel wretch!"

"Be careful of your words, please! You will promise, or not, to be my wife, as you please. I will give you abundant proof of what I have said. You may go to Mr. Dormer and ask him. I will give you just five minutes to decide. In one instance, everything will be all right; in the other, a warrant for Ernest Dormer's arrest shall be served on him before I sleep. That I swear!"

Such a horror of shrinking anguish surged hotly over her, such a pitiful, pitiful woe

settled down in a very blackness of despair on her; and then, with music sounding joyously about her, and happy voices and gay, soft laughter coming tenderly to her senses, with her sweet face white as the white silk toilet she wore, this proud woman had to yield to fate; and for her mother's sake, her father's sake, her own name's sake, she consented, with cold, trembling lips, to be Mervyn Charlton's wife—consented, tacitly, never, never again to think of Lionel Selwyn, or happiness, or hope.

Before she slept, that morning she learned from her brother the shame from which she was saving him; and before another day had ended, her cup of agony overflowed its brim, because there came a letter from Lionel Selwyn, in which he told her his love for her—in which he pleaded with a hopeful, eager passion, that satisfied her entirely; that would have made her the happiest woman on earth, if only—

There was but one thing to do—to go on with her sad load; but one thing to do—to be patient as she could, conscious that she had tried to do what was strictly right.

So the weeks went by, and, almost before she knew it, her wedding day was at hand, that accursed day when, for her young life, the fires of hope should for ever expire—the day which, when it came, brought delightfulness to Mervyn Charlton's handsome face, and heart-sick pain to Lionel Selwyn's, whose entreaties had been so impotent to move the girl from her decision.

In the Dormer drawing-room the few guests were waiting for the bridal party. In the rooms above, Madoline, and her mother, and an intimate friend or so, were in readiness; and then, right in the very midst of the darkest blackness of hopelessness that ever threatened woman, came a sudden reprieve—so sudden, so awfully sudden, that, when somebody rushed downstairs and told the waiting guests and the expectant bridegroom that the ceremony must be delayed on account of Mr. Ernest Dormer's sudden illness, it seemed to Madoline, at least, as, in her bridal dress and veil, she knelt beside the couch on which they laid her brother—this erring brother, for whom she was forbidding herself all human happiness—that fate was relenting at last.

And fate was relenting in a touching, pitiful way, but still relenting. For, while the wedding company were talking below in low, anxious whispers, and Mervyn Charlton was pacing excitedly to and fro, Ernest died, with his arm around his sister's neck.

Then there was a solemn, tearful consultation between the brave, grand girl, who never once hesitated to save her brother, and the white-haired old man of Heaven, who had come to marry the living, and had consigned a departing soul to its Maker and Judge; then a messenger was sent for Lionel Selwyn, and Madoline was married to him, and saved from Mervyn Charlton, whose rage, and jealousy, and disappointment, hot as they were, were less than the pride that forbade him publish to the world the means he had employed to secure his bride. So that, although under the very drip and shadow of Azeazel's dark wing, Madoline's marriage was Heaven's blessing, then and thereafter.

F. B.

FACETIE.

WHAT current coin of the realm is like a hat—A crown-piece, to be sure.

"What is the matter?" asked a lawyer of his coachman. "The horses are running away, sir." "Can you not pull them up?" "I'm afraid not." "Then," said the lawyer, after judicial delay, "run into something cheap."

How to Know a Fool.—By six qualities may a fool be known—anger without cause, speech without profit, change without motive, inquiry without an object, putting trust in a stranger, and wanting capacity to discriminate between a friend and a foe.

It isn't a great way to the end of a cat's nose, but it is far to the end of her tail.

The Spaniards ought to have a good, clean government. Alfonso is the Castile's Hope.

A workman is known by his chips. Don't we know a barber by his shavings?

Time is rightly represented with wings. Everybody knows that Time flies.

Young ladies who play croquet are now known as "maiden-all-for-lawn."

Whisk is a newspaper the sharpest? When it is filed.

A score of schemers are constantly talking about "holding another world's fair." They'd better wait till they get to "another world."

MUSIC AND MATRIMONY.—"Music is the food of love," but it takes something more substantial for matrimony.

Why would it be improper for Mr. Gladstone or Lord Salisbury to court inquiry as to his position on the Egyptian question? Because each of them is already wedded to his own views.

There made a large seizure of crooked whiskey lately. Uncle Tom says he is peculiar about this. He likes his whiskey straight.

A LITTLE BOY being questioned about his sister's beau, was asked if he was very young. "I guess so," he replied, "for he hasn't got much hair."

A LADY FAINT.—Somebody, in describing a beautiful lady, says she has "a face that a painter might dwell upon." Rather a broad face that!

A NACHELON so greatly admired the way in which the housekeeper prepared coffee that he proposed and was accepted, only to find that the coffee was made by the servant.

"My dear," said a fashionable woman to her rich but illiterate husband, "I want fifty pounds." "What for?" he asked. "Seal skin fur," she answered, and she got it.

A CURE FOR THE GOIT.—"Pray Mr. Abernethy, what is a cure for goit?" inquired a luxurious and indolent citizen. "Live upon sixpence a day—and earn it!" was the pithy answer.

"Is Mr. McDermott at home?" inquired a man of a servant who answered the bell. "Ah! sir," replied the maid, "he is dead, and was buried day before yesterday." "Dead is he—ah—well, then, I won't disturb him."

When it was proposed to nominate a man named Random for office, it was objected that, if he should become a candidate, he would be sure to be riddled, as everybody shoots more or less at random.

SPARKING OF THE HOUSE OF A LADY who does not intend to spoil her children by sparing the rod, somebody remarked how neat and clean everything was. "Yes," said Pegg, "everything is like whisks works."

NO CHEATING.—A pedestrian travelling up in the north of Ireland, met a son of old Erin, of whom he inquired how it was the miles were so plaguy long. "Why, you see, your honour," replied the Patlander, "that our roads are not in very good condition, so, just now, we give people very good measure."

OX-TAIL SOUP.—Angry customer: "Hallo! you waiter; where is that ox-tail soup?"

Waiter: "Coming sir—half a minute." Customer: "Confound it! Ox-tails always behind."

"Did anyone drop a shilling here in the straw?" inquired a man on a tramcar last evening. Like chain-lightning several men felt in their pockets, and replied in chorus: "Yes, I did." Then the man walked out upon the platform, so that he could get off and run, if necessary, and said: "Then why don't you get down and look for it before some one picks it up? That's what I do every time I drop money!" And as he skipped off the car, the men who said they had dropped a shilling kept well screened behind their evening papers.

WHAT garment is the most unpleasant to travel in by railway? A jacket.

Two farmers had a dispute about the boundary lines of their farms. Their dispute is now settled, and so are the lawyers—on their farms.

"So you are going to keep a school?" said a young lady to her old aunt. "Well, for my part, sooner than do that I would marry a widower with nine children." "I should prefer that myself," was the reply; "but where is the widower?"

When a lady who has been taking music-lessons for the past eight years hangs back and blushes, and says she really can't play, don't insist on it. The chances are that she can't.

"THE dynamite party!" exclaimed Mrs. Shoddy, who was reading over the papers. "Dear me, Augustus, we'll have to give one right away before those Smiths hear of it! I wonder what it's like?"

A PHYSICIAN undertook to explain to his little daughter the difference between the two schools of medicine, and informed her that the difference consisted in this—that "homeopathy" meant small quantities, and "allopathy" meant large quantities. His daughter, catching the idea, promptly exclaimed: "Then I know what old Mrs. Barker meant when she said Sister Mary was out of proportion! She's got a homeopathic nose and allopathic feet!"

GRAPHIC.—Dibdin had a horse which he used to call "Graphic." "Very odd name," said a friend. "Not at all," responded Tom. "When I bought him it was Buy-o-Graphic; when I named him, it's Top-o-Graphic, and when I want him to go it's Gee-ho-Graphic."

ASKING a lady what her accomplishments are, is, generally speaking, harmless enough. Still, in these days, it might in some cases cause embarrassment to put the question. "Do you paint?"

A PHOTOGRAPH fell asleep in a tram-car the other day, and during the time he was wrapped in the arms of Morpheus the car filled up with passengers. A lady got in, and, as the photographer occupied more room than was necessary, she touched him on the shoulder and asked him to move up a little. This aroused him, and, as he looked up and saw a lady standing in front of him, and thinking he was in his studio, he said, "Full length, or head and shoulders?"

"An, here is a bright thing," said Mrs. Shuttle, as she looked up from the newspaper. "Mr. McCosh suggests that Carlyle's epitaph be: 'Here lies one who gave force to the English tongue.'" "Yes, yes," said Job, looking up from his visions in the grass like, "a mighty bright idea. Wonder if I should be accused of plagiarism if I should inscribe it on your tombstone?" "—I intend to take very good care that you don't see my tombstone. I'll outlive you; so there. Now see if I don't, hatefulness!"

AN ARTFUL ELEPHANT.—An elephant was securely chained to a tree in the cotpoutd opposite Mr. Townsends house, in Calcutta, India. Its driver made an oven at a short distance, in which he put his rice-cakes to bake, and then covered them with stones and grass and went away. When he was gone the elephant, with his trunk, unfastened the chain round his foot, went to the oven and uncovered it, took out and ate the cakes, recovered the oven with the stones and grass as before, and went back to his place. He could not fasten the chain again round his own foot, so he twisted it round and round it, in order to look the same, when the driver returned the elephant was standing with his back to the oven. The driver went to his cakes, discovered the theft, and, looking round caught the elephant's eye as he looked back over his shoulder out of the corner of it. Instantly he detected the culprit, and condign punishment followed. The whole occurrence was witnessed from the windows by the family.

SOCIETY.

THE PRINCE AND PRINCESS CHRISTIAN have left England for Germany, where they are at present on a visit to the Crown Prince and Princess. The Emperor gave a dinner in their honour, and a Court ball has also taken place. The Duke of Saxe-Coburg is likewise on a visit to Berlin, and joins in all the Court festivities.

PRINCE CHRISTIAN VICTOR of Schleswig-Holstein assisted at a concert in aid of the funds of the Bgham Cottage Hospital. The young Prince performed on the violin a "Melodie" by Rubenstein and a Gavotte by Bach. He played with much expression, and merited the encore which was demanded. His second solo on airs from Rossini's *Stabat Mater* was also encored and much applauded.

THE ARCHDUCHESS MAINE THERESA OF AUSTRIA, wife of the Archduke Charles Louis, has been seriously ill with an attack of measles. The disease has now fortunately taken a favourable turn.

It is announced that the engagement between Lord Garmyle, eldest son of Earl Cairns, and Miss Fortescue (Finney), late of the Savoy Theatre, has been broken off, and the matter will come before the law courts in the shape of an action for breach of promise of marriage. The damages are laid at a very heavy figure, the lady having, it is said, refused £10,000 offered her by the family.

LADY ANSTRUTHER has been presented with a portrait of her husband and son by the Conservatives of South Lancashire, in recognition of Sir Wyndham Anstruther's Parliamentary and other services to the county.

THE HON. CAPT. CAPELL, R.N., brother to the Earl of Essex, met with an accident a short time ago. He had just come out of Drummond's, when his foot slipped on the kerb and he fell. At that moment a brougham passed over his shoulder before it could pull up. Captain Capell was as soon as possible placed inside the carriage, and driven to the Charing Cross Hospital. Notwithstanding his rather advanced age, Captain Capell is progressing satisfactorily.

THE bridesmaids' costumes at the marriage of Miss Gowlland and Mr. Douglas Barry were exceedingly elegant. They were composed of ruby velvet and apricot Surah; Princesses' bonnets with apricot aigrettes. Their bouquets of dark red and cream roses were given by the bridegroom. The bride's dress was of rich ivory satin, trimmed with Brussels lace and orange blossoms; her tulle veil was fastened with diamond stars; her train was carried by two little pages dressed in ruby velvet and white lace ornaments; each wore a pearl pin presented by the bride.

A MONUMENT to the late Dean Stanley, subscribed for by old Rugbians and schoolfellows, has been placed in the north transept of Rugby School chapel. The monument, which is the work of Mr. Boehm, is of Carrara marble, and consists of a recumbent effigy of the late dean in surplice and stole, and wearing the badge of office as Chaplain in Ordinary to the Queen.

A MARRIAGE will shortly take place between Captain Barrington Foote, of the Royal Horse Artillery, and Miss Agnes Glyn, youngest daughter of the Hon. Pascoe and Mrs. Glyn.

At the first grand Court ball of the season given at the Winter Palace, St. Petersburg, from two to three thousand of the *élite* of society were present. The Emperor opened the ball with a polonaise, which he danced with the Empress. The British Ambassador, Sir Edward Thornton, danced the first quadrille with the Empress. A magnificent supper was served at one o'clock, and the company began to disperse at two. The Empress's dress was composed of ivory satin, on which were embroidered large bunches of coloured flowers. This was trimmed with pearl-lice and flowers.

STATISTICS.

PETROLEUM wells to the number of 2,890 were put down in 1883, against 3,260 in 1882, and 3,852 in 1881. In 1883, 245 dry holes were found, against 180 in 1882, showing that the limits of the different oil-fields are now pretty well defined, and the prospector who goes outside of them has a pretty good chance to fail in "striking oil."

THE BLIND.—The last English census reveals the encouraging fact that the proportion of the blind to the population has decreased with each successive enumeration since 1851, in which year account of them was taken for the first time. The decrease in the decade ending in 1881 was much greater than in either of the preceding decennial intervals, the number of cases returned on this latter occasion being 22,832, equal to one blind person in every 1,138. This decrease is fairly attributable to the progressive improvement in the surgical treatment of affections of the eye, and to the diminished prevalence among children of small-pox.

MALE AND FEMALE STRENGTH.—The strength of males increases rapidly from twelve to nineteen years, and at a rate similar to that of the weight, and more slowly and regularly, up to thirty years, after which it declines at an increasing rate to the age of sixty years. The strength of females increases at a more uniform rate from nine to nineteen years, more slowly to thirty, after which it falls off in a manner similar to that of males. At eleven years females are weaker than males by twenty-two pounds, at twenty years of age by thirty-six pounds.

GEMS.

LIFE hath no blessings like a prudent friend.

A wise man ought to hope for the best, be prepared for the worst, and bear with equanimity whatever may happen.

The truly grateful heart may not be able to tell of gratitude, but it can feel, and love, and act.

We should do by our cunning as we do by our courage—we should always have it ready to defend ourselves, never to offend others.

Nothing so narrows the playground of wit as when individual opinions and love of truth stand therein as fixed, solid pillars.

Life is loving, and that soul lives the largest life that is truest to his God and himself, and is most useful to his fellows.

No man, for any considerable period, can wear one face to himself and another to the multitude without finally getting bewildered as to which may be the truer.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

SCALLOPED EGGS.—Mince any kind of cold meat, season with pepper and salt, adding a little breadcrumb; cover the bottoms of preserve-saucers with it, putting in each a small piece of butter; break a fresh egg on top; set on a slide in a hot oven; when the egg begins to cook, sprinkle a little breadcrumb rolled very fine on it, with a dust of salt and pepper; send to table hot; breakfast or lunch.

ROAST LEG OF PORK.—Make a sage-and-onion stuffing; choose a small, tender leg of pork, and score the skin in squares with a sharp knife; cut an opening in the knuckle, loosen the skin, and fill with the sage-and-onion stuffing; spread the whole leg with a thin coating of sweet butter, and put it before a clear fire, but not too near; baste well while cooking, and, when nearly done, draw a little nearer the fire to brown; thicken the dripping with a little flour, add boiling water, season with salt and pepper, boil up at once, and serve in a gravy-tureen.

MISCELLANEOUS.

In Sweden a bride has her pockets filled with bread. It is supposed that every piece she gives to the poor on her way to church averts some misfortune. In Norway the bride herself hands round strong drinks, that all the company may drink long life to her. The wedding feast last some days, and the guests have no wish to let their moderation be known.

A POLICE COURT AT CAIRO.—The prefect and his deputy were arrayed in black coats and trousers, white waistcoats and patent boots. But they sat, as their predecessors sat a thousand years ago, cross-legged on the divan. Litigants came up without formality, kissed their knees or their hands, according to rank or favour, bent, with hands folded in their sleeves, to declare the grievance volubly, answered a brief, harsh question, and took the verdict helplessly. Cases lasted, on an average, two minutes each, as near as I could time it; and all the while men came and went in the little room, talking mostly in high, quarrelsome tones. If any one present was struck with an observation, he offered it usually, and his worship listened. After delivering judgment, always preceded by a grunt of general dissatisfaction, he clapped his hand, and a soldier rushed in at full gallop, holding up his sword. Forthwith the parties retired to discuss matters warmly outside, in full hearing of the court. A matrimonial difficulty referred to the authorities lasted but four minutes by the watch. A thin, peaking man looked the husband, while the wife, so far as one could judge by eyes and nose, was very pretty. The gentleman told his tale, the purport of which I could not gather. The lady turned red to the tip of her little nose, and her eyes flashed. She took up her parable vehemently and sternly. The prefect asked further explanations of the husband, who turned very pale. He found nothing effective to reply. His worship pronounced in a single phrase, the galloping soldier appeared, and off went the pair. I asked of an official who spoke English if the man was going to prison. "No," said he; "he goes home." It must be admitted there is something to be urged for a system which can deal with domestic troubles in this superior way.

ENTERTAINING COMPANY.—If a hostess is dul and without tact, her guests cannot enjoy an evening at her house. Manner, then, is of the greatest importance in determining the success or failure of our efforts for the entertainment of our friends. Some people taboo what is called a good manner; they maintain that if the motive be good it matters little whether the manner be graceful or rough. School girls are often of this opinion; they are so afraid of being thought "young ladyish" or affected that they rush to the opposite extreme, and think themselves true and straightforward if rough and ready. Self-consciousness and shyness are often the real cause of this awkwardness; in trying to be something they are unnatural and uneasy; but before experience these gaucheries disappear, and an easy and graceful manner is frequently the happy result. Manner may in itself be of two kinds, the manner which is perfectly well-bred and refined, but withal very chilling, and the manner into which is infused all the charm of a kindly, sunny, honest nature, with a sincere regard to please. On its surface it bears the stamp of truth, here is no "mere veneer," no courtesy put on, but a graciousness of speech and action which flows from the inner being, and is always there. As well as manner, tact, that happy quality which in woman is supposed to be in-born, plays a prominent part in the art of entertaining. Tact enters into the feelings of others without showing that it does so; it anticipates wishes, and gives them fulfilment almost before they are wished; in short, it is useful in a thousand instances, and may well be called another sense.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

AURORA.—The name selected by you signifies "the dawn."

S.T.L.—1 Rusty nail water will sometimes remove freckles of long standing. 2. Apply lunar caustic to the warts, but be careful not to touch the skin.

DEVEREUX.—A tenant for life can only grant a lease for twenty-one years; it is best, therefore, in purchasing the property to have the title examined by a respectable solicitor.

M. D. B.—Buckram is a kind of linen cloth, very stiff and strong, gummed, calendered, and dyed several colours. It is used by milliners as a stiffening for ties, bonnets, made bows, &c., and sometimes by packers and warehousemen for wrappings.

FLORRY.—Biting the nails is a habit that grows upon children, and should be checked at once. They should be dipped in the tincture of aloes or some other bitter tincture, and if that fails each finger end should be encased in a strong leather stall.

C. B.—The best remedy for corns is to wear easy shoes and change them every day, keeping two pairs in constant wear. The local application of the strongest acetic acid is also beneficial.

AMATEUR.—Various kinds of wood are employed in the interior mechanism of a pianoforte, of which the principle are pine, beech, sycamore, and cedar. It would be next door to an impossibility for an amateur to construct one throughout himself.

DAISY.—To get rid of pimples, dab them with a lotion composed of one ounce of oil of sweet almonds, and one ounce of fluid potassa, shaken well together, adding one ounce of rose water and six ounces of clear water. The application may be made at night, just before retiring.

DAISYMAID.—In such matters it is quite useless to listen to tale-bearers and gossip, who are only too ready to weave their "webs of petty lies and sneers." Take the matter into your own hands, look out and judge for yourself. If you think you then have good grounds for suspicion frankly tax him with it, and ask for an explanation.

G. L.—As far as the coin of the realm is concerned copper bronze is legal tender up to and including twelve pence; silver, forty shillings, gold, to any amount, and bank notes to any amount above five pounds. A five-pound note is not legal tender for a sum of five pounds.

RUTH.—The word temperance does not at all involve total abstinence from alcoholic liquors. It was one of the four cardinal virtues among the Romans answering, perhaps, to our own "moderation," meaning that the person who possessed it had sufficient control over himself to regulate and moderate his desires. Its use by teetotallers probably arose from their opinion that in the use or abuse of alcohol there is no medium, but that the only possible moderation is to abstain altogether.

FUMIGATOR.—Meerschaum means literally "the foam of the sea," chemically it is a silicate of magnesia, and is found in several parts of Europe, but principally in Greece and Turkey. In Germany and Austria, also in this country, it is largely used for making tobacco pipes, which are prepared for sale after being carved or turned by being first soaked in tallow, afterwards in wax, and being finally polished with shave grass.

P. W. R.—1. The Dominical letter is the letter which, in almanacs, denotes the Sabbath, or *die Dominis*, the Lord's day. The seven letters of the alphabet are used for this purpose, the same letter standing for Sunday during a whole year, and at or twenty-eight years the same letters returning in the same order. 2. The Diocletian era was used by Christian writers until the introduction of the Christian era in the sixth century, and is still employed by the Abyssinians and Copts. It dates from the day on which Diocletian was proclaimed Emperor at Chalcedon, 29th of August, 284. It is also called the era of martyrs, on account of the persecution of the Christians in the reign of Diocletian.

FRED D.—The Strasburg cathedral, which is one of the grandest structures in the world, was founded in 510, and destroyed by lightning in 1007. Its restoration was commenced in the eleventh century. The sculptures above the portals are said to belong to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The upper part of the spire was erected by Johann Hiltz, of Cologne, at the commencement of the fifteenth century. Its height is 468 feet. The design of this cathedral is ascribed to Erwin of Steinbach, whose plans are still preserved. This church suffered some damage during the bombardment of Strasburg in the Franco-Prussian war, but the injuries have been repaired.

W. F. R.—St. Peter's at Rome is surpassed by no cathedral in splendour, and equalled by none in magnitude. The building of the church, from its foundation in 1460 until its dedication, occupied 175 years; and if we include the work done under Pius VI., three and a half centuries passed before it was completed, during which time forty-three popes reigned. The height of the dome from the pavement to the base of the lantern is 465 feet; to the top of the cross 443 feet. The height of the cathedral at Milan from the pavement to the top of the statue of the Madonna is 355 feet. The cathedral at Cologne will have towers 511 feet high; that at Amiens has a central spire which is 423 feet in height. The dome of St. Paul's is 965 feet from the ground.

E. M. S.—The child cannot now be affiliated.

D. W. F.—The colour of the hair is auburn. Hand-writing very good.

HARRY D.—The stones used in lithography come chiefly from Bavaria.

M. A. G.—The cause is probably debility. Take a good tonic. There is no remedy but the tweezers or a dye.

L. D. B.—The Inquisition to which you refer was a court, or tribunal, established in the twelfth century by Pope Innocent III., for the suppression of heresy. It was confined to Spain and its dependencies, Portugal, and part of Italy.

PERPLEXED.—1. They stand for duodecimo, sexto-decimo, octodecimo, &c. A duodecimo is a book in which a sheet is folded into twelve leaves. The size of a book thus composed is usually indicated as 12mo. 2. Telegraphers make a fair living.

PERRY N.—The Tower of Babel, it is said, was over 2,000 feet in circumference at the base. It is also said that the city walls were 300 or 350 feet high, with towers having a height of 430 feet. The great Egyptian pyramid (Cheops) was 479 feet high.

ELENA D.—The word "whiskey" is a corruption of the Celtic word "uisquebaugh," meaning the "water of life," the latter half of the word having been dropped; by a curious anomaly the word as it stands means simply "water." Brandy is a corruption of the German "brantwein," meaning, literally, burnt wine. Gin is from the French "genièvre," juniper, from the spirit being flavoured with the berries of that plant.

PURSY.—The name Mab must not be confounded with Mabel. The former is the name of a fairy mentioned by Shakespeare and others of the early poets, and is said to be a corruption of a Celtic word meaning a child; while Mabel comes from the French, and is a corruption of "Ma belle."

SNOW-FLOWERS.

I awoke one winter morning,
And I found my garden white
With a host of shining blossoms
That had not been there at night;
All the barren ground was covered,
And the naked branches, quite.

For the angels, in the night-time,
Flying softly to and fro,
Bearing to the gates of heaven
Spirits from the earth below,
Had let fall upon my garden
Lovely garlands—flowers of snow.

M. I.

D. S. C.—The Sorbonne University at Paris takes its name from Robert de Sorbonne, a learned ecclesiastic, who founded it in 1252. He was confessor and chaplain to St. Louis, who had a great esteem for him, and gave him the canonry of Cambrai. He died in 1274 in Champagne.

P. G. M.—Laghorn, or in the Italian *Livorno*, is a seaport in Tuscany on the Mediterranean, about forty-eight miles from Florence. Among its products is a peculiar kind of straw from which the so-called Laghorn hats, once so fashionable, were made.

W. M. D.—Mica is a mineral having a somewhat metallic lustre, and capable of being split up into thin plates. It enters into the composition of most of the primary rocks, in shales, sandstones, and other sedimentary deposits. It consists chemically of the silicates of potash and alumina, the latter being sometimes replaced by lithia, magnesia, and lime.

P. W. N.—The motto of the Prince of Wales is "*Ich Dien*." Besides the coronet the heir apparent is entitled to the distinguishing badge called the "Prince of Wales's Feathers," consisting of a plume of three ostrich feathers, with an ancient coronet, under which in a scroll is the motto "*Ich Dien*." This was first assumed by Edward the Black Prince after the battle of Cressy, in which he slew with his own hand King John of Bohemia, and took from his head the plume and motto which succeeding princes have borne.

ETHEL.—The line, "Heaven lies about us in our infancy," occurs in Wordsworth's ode of "Intimations of Immortality." We quote from the fifth stanza:—

"Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter darkness,
But trailing clouds of glory, do we come
From God, who is our home;
Heaven lies about us in our infancy."

C. L. G.—One of the most extraordinary bridges of ancient times was that which, according to Herodotus, Queen Nitocris constructed over the Euphrates at Babylon. Its length was five furlongs. The bridge of the Holy Trinity at Florence, over the Arno, built in 1569, has a total length of 322 feet. Waterloo Bridge, over the Thames, is 1,240 feet in length. In the United States there are comparatively few stone bridges of great size. Perhaps the best is the High Bridge of the Croton aqueduct, over the Harlem River at New York. Its length is 1,460 feet. One of the most remarkable modern bridges is that at Havre de Grace, over the Susquehanna River. It is 3,271 feet long, divided into twelve spans, resting upon granite piers. Suspension bridges are of very remote origin. They may be traced back to the year 65. One was formed of chains, supporting a roadway of plank resting directly upon them; length 330 feet.

R. D. B.—Apply to the secretary of the institution.

CHILL.—The hair enclosed is dark brown. Hand-writing fair.

A. M. B.—You cannot marry without the consent of your parents.

DAISY B.—A pretty girl with an agreeable expression. Send stamped addressed envelope.

S. S. S.—The lines are by Lord Byron, and occur in the *Gaiour*.

R. S. D.—Michaelmas is so-called as being the feast of the archangel Michael.

IGNORAMUS.—The hull of a ship is her frame or body, exclusive of the masts, yards, sails, or rigging.

C. B. T.—You require some alterative medicine, followed by a course of tonics.

A. R. A.—1. Your mother is your best counsellor. 2. Yes, by banns. 3. Gibraltar is in Spain, but belongs to England.

ADA.—Consult a respectable medical man. From your description it seems like a case of confirmed dyspepsia.

K. F.—Jeremiah was the second of the four great prophets, and the word Jeremiah, meaning complaint and lamentation, is derived from his name.

OLD FRED.—In helping a lady out of a carriage, you stand at the left, so as to extend your right hand, which she naturally clasps with her right.

SCHOOLBOY.—So-called impersonal verbs are such as are used only in the third person, as it snows, it rains, but the term is very misleading.

B. F. G.—The Lyceum Theatre is named after the celebrated academy at Athens, which was so called from its position near the temple of Apollo Lyceus.

R. F. G.—The word "clinical" in medicine is applied to the treatment of diseases at the bedside of the sick; it is derived from a Greek word meaning a bed.

W. R.—The word clinker properly means the black oxide of iron obtained in scales from red-hot iron while in process of forging.

B. W. T.—Leave the young lady to her own devices until she gets into a better humour. She was guilty of decided rudeness; probably the consciousness that she was in fault made her cross with herself and you too.

EMMER.—It was, as you term it, a "farewell card," the letters "P. P. G." standing for *Pere, prends congé*, to take leave. When you write to your friend you should acknowledge its receipt.

E. D.—"Dovetailing," in carpentry, is the name given to a peculiar method of joining two pieces of wood together. The end of one piece is cut into a fan-like projection, like a bird's tail, which is fitted into a hollow of exactly the same shape.

MARY MAY.—"Dowry" and "Dower" are quite different, though often confounded; the former is the marriage portion brought by a wife to her husband; dower, is the portion of her husband's lands, &c., to which a wife is entitled on his death.

CARRIE S.—The young man's conduct is only explicable on the assumption that he has got tired of you, and transferred his affections to someone else. You can easily afford to laugh at him and let him go, if you do not seem to be overheard and ears in love with him yourself.

ALDA.—The grandmother must support the child, if of sufficient ability, but it has been authoritatively laid down that a person is not compelled to keep the child of anyone else, or even his or her aged mother, if in debt or practically insolvent.

G. F.—The exact quotation is:—

"And dark as winter was the flow
Of ice rolling rapidly."

It is from Campbell's "Hohenlinden." The Isar is a river in the Tyrol rising near Innsbruck, and finally falling into the Danube.

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